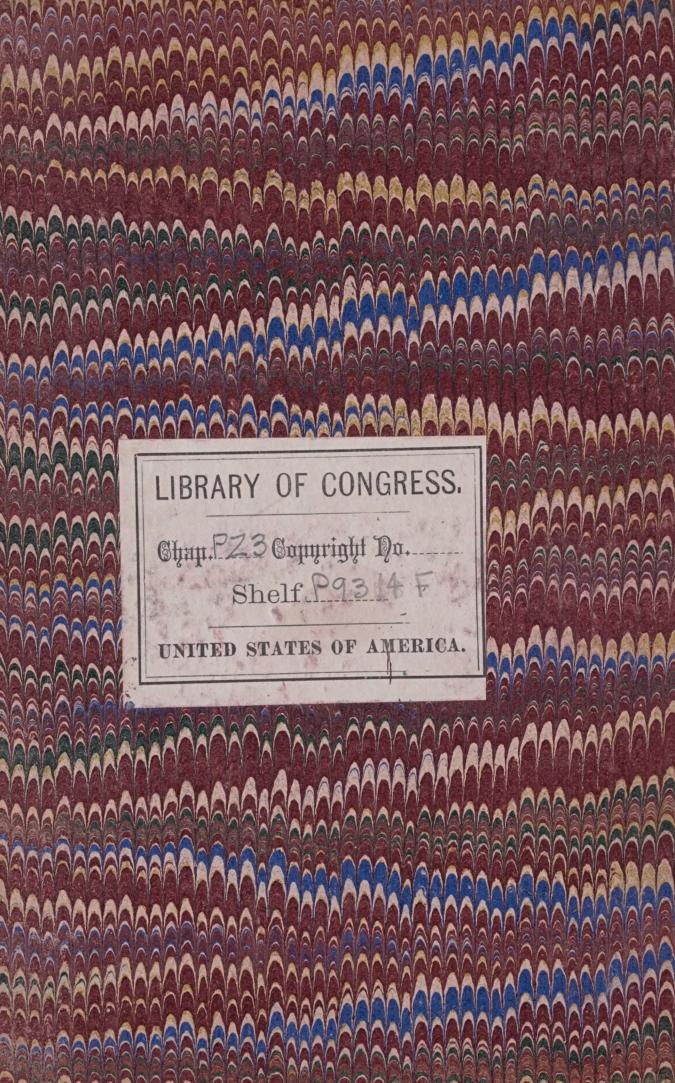
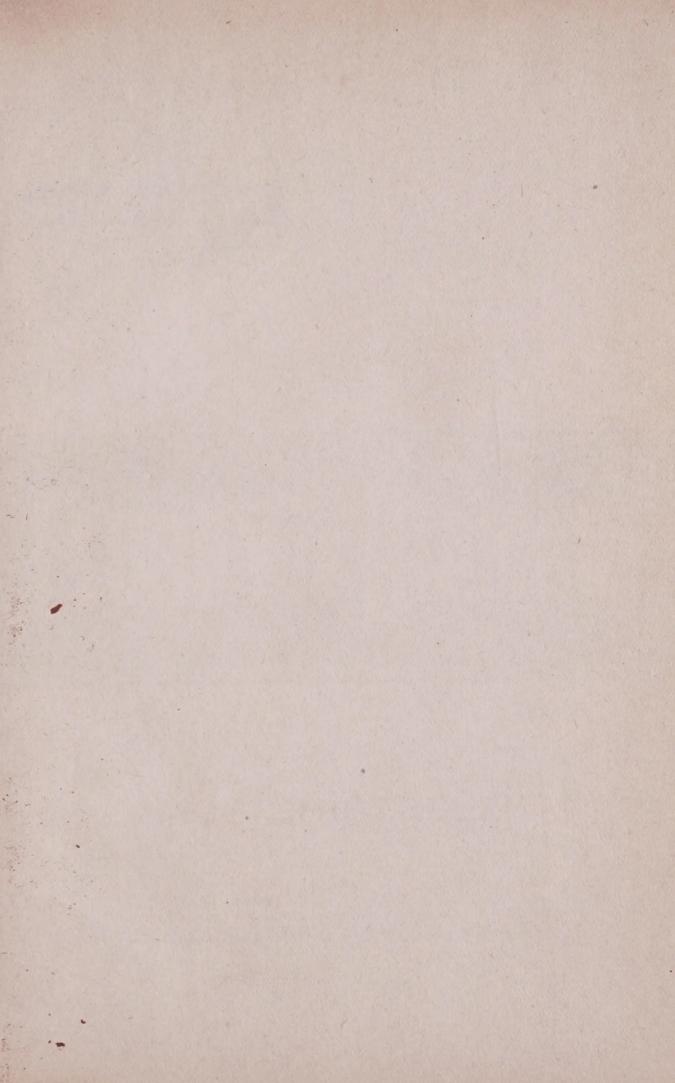


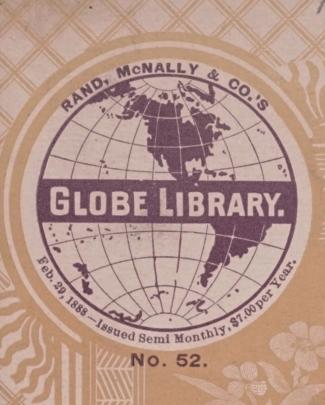
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# A FLURRY IN DIAMONDS

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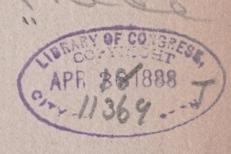
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## A FLURRY IN DIAMONDS.

A Novel

BY

## AMOS CHIPTREE.



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## A FLURRY IN DIAMONDS.

#### CHAPTER I.

I AM junior partner in the house of Hopkins & Co., manufacturing jewelers, Maiden Lane. The senior of the firm is my father, Mr. John Hopkins, who established the business many years ago in a small way in a suburban town noted for its manufactures in this line. As the business grew larger, like most of his competitors, he opened a city office and salesroom in room in "the Lane," in which, after leaving school at eighteen, with a preference for a mercantile rather than a college and professional career, I was promptly installed, first as a general clerk and later as assistant manager. My father still retained chief control both at the factory and store, in each of which he passed a part of every day. Three years ago, after having passed a sort of apprenticeship at the store for four years, I was duly announced as a partner in the house and assumed more responsibility in

management, relieving my father, in his advancing years, of most of his cares, so that nowadays he takes the world easier than has been his custom. He still retains the larger interest in his concern, however, and gives the business all the attention required of him.

We do a large business in a general line of the finest grades of goods, especially in mounting diamonds and other precious stones, "of which we always keep on hand a valuable stock, both mounted and unset," as the advertisements run.

Though the business is not what it once was in the way of profit, and competition has somewhat slackened the hold which the old house formerly had on the trade, yet our name and reputation go for something, and we manage to realize pretty comfortable incomes from it.

As our business, more than any other perhaps, has to do with the soft side of human nature, and our wares appeal directly to the vanity of people as well as to the depth of their purses, we have many opportunities for studying the different characteristics of our patrons, and the result is sometimes quite entertainingas well as profitable. As an instance of this, our house once sold in flush times a rare gem of immense size, for \$30,000, currency of the day,

to a celebrated pugilist, upon whose expansive shirt front it became the envy of every wouldbe "sport" in town. It could be worn with perfect safety by its owner, on account of his influence over such people, but in the possession of a respectable person it would have been, like Wilkie Collins's Moonstone, a dangerous gem to its holder. Necessarily such purchasers are rare, but not more so than stones of such value. Though strict moralists may condemn the wearing of expensive jewelry, the fact remains that the majority of mankind, and womankind too, have an appetite for it which must be humored, and, as it is our business to cater for them, we undertake to do it, in a satisfactory manner, "at the old stand."

But all this is "shoppy," and not to the point of my story, which, with your permission, I propose to tell in my own way. It is the record of a queer jumble of circumstances, and if it interests you nearly as much in the reading of it as it did me while participating in the events to which it relates, I shall be amply repaid for the trouble I have taken and propose to take before we part company.

## CHAPTER II.

One day early in May of the present year Mr. James Lindley, the father of my most intimate friend, Pierre Lindley, called at the store, as he had often a way of doing when down town, and, as he was about leaving after a pleasant chat, mentioned the fact that his daughter's nineteenth birthday would occur in a day or two, and, as he always remembered both his children in gifts on these anniversaries, he desired to purchase something appropriate, but was quite at a loss just what to select. He had sounded her a little on the subject, and her preference semed to be for a pair of solitaire earrings, although she was quite modest about it and did not insist upon them. The old gentleman said he thought "she had a fair supply of jewelry, left by her mother, but perhaps it was old fashioned, and come to think of it, he believed that, although there were a pair or two of earrings in the collection, he did not remember that there were any set with diamonds." For his part "he didn't believe in them any more

than he did in ornamenting the nose after the manner of the Indians, but still he supposed he was an old fogy, and "if Kate could get any comfort from owning them, why, perhaps she might as well have them."

At his request I showed him a fine assortment, and, knowing him to be rich, was careful not to select any low-priced goods.

I could get no idea from him about how much he would invest in the jewels, nor did he know any more than did I how Miss Kate's taste might run as to size or style of the ornaments.

He was in quite a quandary, out of which, with one eye to business and the other to pleasing Miss Kate, I assisted him by suggesting that I should select a member of sets of various patterns and values, drop in at his house during the evening, and let Miss Kate make her own selection, subject to his approval.

The idea struck him favorably, and, cautioning me in a joking way not to bring any of extravagant value and get up a conspiracy with Kate to ruin him, he departed, satisfied to be so easily relieved of his anxiety on the question of the gift.

I selected a dozen pairs of the latest designs we had, all mounted with perfect, first water stones, none of them very large, but ranging in value from \$400 to \$1000, the pair. I removed them from their cases and hooked each pair into a small piece of card-board, with the weight of stones and value of the set plainly marked thereon. Each pair also bore the little tag containing our private mark and number, which we always keep attached to goods of this class. The cards being separately wrapped in thin paper, the whole were then placed loosely in a small pasteboard box which I could easily slip into the inner pocket of my coat.

Their combined value was just \$7,800, selling price, and a beautiful, brilliant lot of sparklers they were.

#### CHAPTER III.

I had known the Lindley family ever since my school days, when my friendship with Pierre had commenced. This intimacy had continued, with slight interruptions, up to the present time, the longest period of our separation having occurred during Pierre's four years at college, the intimacy being resumed again when he returned to the city to prosecute his law studies, and later became settled in practice with a Mr. Blakely his father's friend and attorney, and a distinguished member of the bar.

I was a frequent visitor at the house, after passing the nights there with Pierre. I had seen Kate grow up from a child, and noted the indications of her increasing beauty of face and figure with the interest of a brother. Having no sister of my own, and being thrown so much into the company of this very interesting young sister of Pierre's, I had come, naturally, I think, to regard her in much the same way that he did, with no thought of that regard developing into anything either sentimental or romantic. For

Mr. Lindley, senior, I always had a strong attachment, which I believe was reciprocated on his part towards me. At all events, I was heartily welcomed at his house, and he encouraged in every way the intimacy between Pierre and myself.

On the evening in question, after a light dinner at my club, I strolled around to the house, which was situated a little off from the present center of fashionable residences, although when Mr. Lindley built it, some twenty years ago, before the neighborhood began to be encroached upon by the advancing demands of business, it was quite a swell location.

The house, a large double one, faced with brown stone, was not unlike many of its kind so distinctive of the house architecture of New York before the inroads of the Queen Anne, Elizabethan, Colonial and other ornate and varied styles so prevalent to-day in houses of the better class. But, while so plain of exterior appearance, it was a roomy, cheerful house within, and in its expensive finishings and rich but homelike furnishings demonstrated the ample means of its owner, combined with the excellent taste of his daughter, who having lost her mother in childhood, assumed at an early age the control of domestic affairs, for which she had a natural liking and ability.

My ring was answered by Jerry, a smart-looking colored lad, who acted as butler, waiter, and generally useful man about the house. Learning from him that Miss Kate was in the reception room, I went directly there with my usual lack of formality. Fairly rushing up to meet me, with an abandon which I thought, under the circumstances, was excusable, and a welcoming hand-shake which was assuring, she did not wait for me to be seated before she began.

"I am awfully glad to see you, Fred, as I always am, you know; but papa says you have a pleasant surprise in store for me, and I have been on the anxious seat of expecting so long-ever since he told me at dinner in fact, that I I am getting worked up to a high tension."

"As it must be fully a quarter of an hour since you were warned of your anticipated pleasure, it is only a wonder to me that you have managed to survive at all until my arrival. So not to assume any responsibility for your symptoms taking on a worse turn, if you will seat yourself at that table and allow me to do the same, I will at once relieve your anxiety and myself of the innocent cause of your trouble."

So saying, I drew a chair up for her and another for myself on opposite sides of a little

ebony table, previously removing therefrom a small statuette which it held.

As soon as we were seated I drew the box from my pocket and placed the contents upon the table, in the careless manner usual to us in the business. As I have said, they were a pretty lot even by daylight at the store among so many others, but, as they were displayed under the brilliant gaslight, on the dark background of the table-cover, their merits were more fully developed.

Drawing back with a little shriek of delight, Kate did not appear to comprehend the purport of the display, although she suspected, I think, that it was in some way connected with her approaching birthday. I explained matters to her, and, as she seemed, quite modestly, indisposed to make a selection alone, I suggested that she should call in her father and Pierre for conference, as I declined to recommend any choice to her. This plan meeting with her approval she rang for Jerry, and, on his appearance, sent him to summon them.

They soon came in and Kate meeting her father with a kiss said, "So this is the pleasant surprise you told me of? Isn't he a dear, good papa, Pierre, to be so thoughtful of me? And to think that he should have decided upon

the very thing I most desire." This as if she were entirely innocent of ever having given a hint upon the subject.

I arose as they approached, in order to make room for them about the table, and as Kate led them up, they all remained standing for a few moments in a general survey of the diamonds.

They formed a very interesting group to me, this little family, whose pleasant home life always ran so smoothly, surrounded, as it was, by all that wealth, liberally scattered, could provide for their comfort and enjoyment.

Mr. Lindley had commenced life a poor boy. Early apprenticed to a mechanical trade for which he had great aptness, after reaching his majority he had rapidly advanced, first to be a foreman, then superintendent, and later on a partner in the large manufacturing establishment which he had entered a dozen years before with apparently no better prospects of success than the other boys of similar age and circumstances with whom he was associated. He had soon attracted the attention of his employers by his marked ingenuity and inventive genius, and was scarcely "out of his time" before he began reaping the benefit of important original inventions, in the way of time and labor saving machinery. He had retired from active

business several years since with a snug fortune, and besides, was still in receipt of an almost princely income from royalties paid him for the use of his valuable patents.

I see him now as he stands there with his son and daughter interested in surveying the sparkling jewels upon the table. Nearly six feet in height, with broad, square shoulders and erect figure, good development of bone and muscle, without much spare flesh, he looks the very impersonation of health and vigorous middle age. His thick, dark-brown hair and close-trimmed beard and mustache show only here and there signs of advancing age in a sprinkling of gray. Rather full-faced, with a florid complexion, high, broad forehead and large brown eyes; with a pleasant, amiable expression of features and easy courtly manner, he is every inch a gentleman, self-made and self-taught. His children have inherited more or less of his qualities of person and character. In his daughter this is noted in the rather high color of her complexion, the massive coils of rich brown hair, and, so far as the expression goes, in her eyes which, however, are darker, fuller and of a sparkling brightness rare to find. She is scarcely above the medium height, of well-developed figure, graceful in movement,

unconventional and charmingly familiar in her ways. Pierre resembles his father in many Tall and compactly built, dark-haired and dark-eyed, handsome features with a cheerful, sunny look about them, he shows to those who come often in his way that he has been well schooled in what pertains to perfect manliness, no less in a practical than in an intellectual sense.

They were soon seated and engaged in examining the jewels, all of them, even to the old gentleman, disclosing that sort of infatuation which a collection of fine diamonds, properly mounted and in a good light, appears to have for people not in the trade. Expressing their preferences rather hurriedly, only to change their opinions again and again, finally the decisions of all seemed to lie upon either one of two pairs, priced respectively at \$550 and \$650, the larger stones being passed over both on account of their greater cost and a suspicion, expressed by Pierre, that "they might be a little 'loud' for so modest and quiet a person as Kate, ahem."

Finally Mr. Lindley suggested "as Kate is the one to be tortured by wearing them, let her decide the matter for herself. By trying them in her ears, and posing before the mirror there, as

only women know how to do, she can get the proper effect."

Kate, complying smilingly, arose, and, adjusting them one after the other, carefully scanning the effect of each in the glass, was not long in deciding upon those which I thought would be her choice. This was the pair marked at \$650, and, as her selection was approved by all save myself, who had no voice in the matter, excepting to vouch for their rare quality and novelty of design, I considered the matter as settled, and that I had made a good sale.

As I had an engagement later in the evening and did not wish to be encumbered with the box of jewels, I requested Kate to retain them all until the next day, when I would call or send for those to be returned. "Besides," I said, "you can thus have an opportunity of a further comparison of them by daylight, and be able to more satisfactorily determine your choice."

This arrangement seeming most agreeable, after cautioning Kate in a joking manner to be careful and put them out of the reach of burglars, as I should hold her responsible for them, I departed to keep my appointment, for which I was already a little late.

## CHAPTER IV.

Next morning upon reaching the store I found my father already in the office. He had come in early to arrange some private business of his own before starting upon a little tour of pleasure, accompanied by my mother, and which he said would occupy ten days or so. They were to leave that afternoon by one of the Sound steamers, and mother was to meet him at the office in time for the boat.

I have neglected to state that father had always kept his residence in the town in which our factory was situated, where also I had made it my home, coming and going to and from the city daily, until, as my responsibilities had increased at the store, and to save time, as well as having a liking for city life, during the past two years I had occupied a suite of rooms at a fashionable up-town hotel.

It was not the most agreeable way in the world of living, but as a number of my acquaint-ances, business and social, managed to subsist in the same manner, and as, consequently, I did

not lack for company, and besides, often managed to turn a little business among the former during the evenings, I did not object to it for a while at least. Part of my meals I took at the restaurant in the house, and a greater part of them at my club in the near vicinity, besides often dining with the Lindleys, and, as I have said, passing the nights there. I frequently passed the Sundays at home with my folks, and often ran over there between times, thus retaining a very pleasant domestic and social connection in my native town; so that altogether I did not have much time to pine in my bachelor quarters.

To return to the story. Shortly after my arrival at the store I was called out on a business errand down the street, and, on my return a few minutes later, I found Jerry, the servant up at the Lindley's, awaiting me. He hastily handed me a note addressed to me in Mr. Lindley's hand, which upon tearing open, I found to run as follows:

Tuesday morning.

FRED,—

Your diamonds have been stolen in a very mysterious manner while we were at breakfast Come up at once if you can. If you think pro-

1 1 L ...

per, you may confer with the police on your way, but would advise that you do so in a way to avoid publicity.

Yours hastily,
JAS. LINDLEY.

Concealing my excitement as much as possible, I first dismissed Jerry, with instructions to hurry home and report that I would be up right away, and then telling father that I was called out upon very urgent business, and requesting him to look after matters in my absence, I left, promising to return in time to see him and mother before they left on their journey.

I decided to go at once to detective headquarters and secure the services of an officer there in whose shrewdness I had great confidence. He had been employed by us in business of a similar character, connected with the robbery of one of our traveling salesmen, which resulted in his cleverly capturing the thieves and recovering most of the stolen goods.

He was not at the office when I arrived there, and quite impatient and not a little excited, I was about leaving without divulging my business, when he came strolling in. Quietly stepping up to him and saluting him, in as few words as possible I stated the nature of my business,

and requested him to accompany me at once, to which, after a moment's interview with his chief, he agreed, and calling a carriage, we were soon on our way.

This man, Sloane by name, was no different in appearance from hundreds of men whom one daily meets about town. He was a fair-looking man of perhaps fifty years, of average size and weight, dressed in an ordinary business suit of gray checks, clean linen, well brushed shoes and the conventional round top hat of the day. He looked neither more nor less than an ordinary business man or smart clerk. His manners were easy, and his whole appearance rather pleasing than otherwise. His reputation in his calling was high, both at head-quarters and among the business community, with whom he had extensive and varied experiences in his line.

As I had no further information to impart on the subject in hand than was contained in the few lines from Mr. Lindley, our conversation on the way up-town was general, and I found Mr. Sloane to be a fair talker, but a better listener, which, perhaps, was more in his way.

We soon arrived at the house and were met at the door by Mr. Lindley, who, upon my introducing Mr. Sloane, at once invited us into the library for consultation. The old gentleman was somewhat agitated and seemed relieved and pleased at our arrival.

As soon as we were seated, with rather a forced smile upon his face, he said:

"Well, Fred, our efforts to celebrate Kate's birthday appeared to have had a rather serious climax, don't they?"

"Well, yes sir," I replied, "judging from your note I should say it looks that way. But as I know nothing of the particulars, just how serious it may prove I can not of course surmise."

"As time is valuable in such cases to your friend here, Mr. Sloane I believe you called him, I will at once repeat to you all the facts of the case so far as I know them. After you left last night Kate took all the diamonds and placed them in the safe up-stairs.

"This morning before breakfast she took them out, and into her room, for a further comparison by daylight, as suggested by you, and, her former choice being confirmed, she placed the pair selected in her ears, for the purpose, as she expressed it, of 'stunning' Pierre and myself at breakfast. Just then Jerry came and told her that breakfast was ready, and, as you know, Fred, that Kate must always look things over

in the dining-room before either the family or guests are summoned, she ran down-stairs, leaving your diamonds carelessly exposed upon her dressing-table. As breakfast was announced, on my way down, in passing the door of Kate's room and casually looking in, I saw the girl Winnie standing in front of the glass, with one of the rings in her ear and apparently admiring the effect. Stepping into the room, I went toward her, when she hearing me approach, pulled it out and threw it down among the rest. As she turned she met my reproving glance in an embarrassed manner and hastily left the room, neither of us having spoken. With no thought that Winnie would steal the jewels, but with an idea of scaring Kate and reproving her for tempting the cupidity of the servants, I gathered the jewelry together in the box, and, going through into my own room, placed it in a drawer of my dressing-case, and, locking the same, placed the key in my pocket and went down-stairs. Pierre following shortly after, we were soon seated at the table. During the meal Pierre chaffed Kate considerably over her poor taste in wearing diamonds in the In answer to his good-natured taunts she explained her reason for doing so, that she wore them especially to please him and me, and more in the same view. I put on an innocent face and asked her if, before coming down, she had replaced the balance of the diamonds in the safe. Upon her replying in the negative, and acknowledging that she had left them exposed in her room, assuming a very serious manner, I read her quite a lecture on her oversight in thus tempting the servants of the house, to say nothing of the great risk of our becoming the victims of prowling thieves, of whom we hear so much nowadays. Pierre joined me in what he evidently considered merely a little innocent tantalizing of his sister, as of course he was ignorant of the scare I had prepared for Kate as a further warning to her. We succeeded in getting her into quite a worriment over the affair.

"After Pierre had hurried off down town, which he did as soon as breakfast was over, Kate left me at the table, saying she would go up and put away the jewelry, thus easing my mind, although she had not thought of any danger, and thought that I was more than usually apprehensive of it. Chuckling to myself, I followed after her, and had just reached the door to the library here, when I heard Kate coming down the stairs, and, turning to meet her, saw that she was greatly agitated over her

discovery. She beckoned me in here in a most excited manner, and scarcely able to talk at all, she told me that the diamonds were gone, box and all. I tried to appear horrorstricken at her words, while I had to labor to keep from laughing at the success of my ruse. I repeated my scolding over her carelessness, said 'I told you so,' and otherwise treated her rather cruelly for a few moments. When I thought that she had been sufficiently punished for what after all was a perfectly natural, if not quite excusable, offense, I tried to pacify her excitement, which kept increasing. I finally told her of what I had witnessed on my way down-stairs, of my having put the jewels in a safe place, and that now that she was through with her lesson, I would go up and get them for her to put in the safe until they were called for. Inwardly pleased at the success of my little scheme, I went up to my room followed by Kate, unlocked the drawer and drew it out, when, to my dismay, I perceived that the diamonds were missing. Search the drawer as I would, not a sign of them could I discover. I tried the other drawers, hoping, as a person will in such a case, that I had mistaken the proper one. I looked into all kinds of impossible places and receptacles, but they were gone

and, up to this time, no clue of them has been found, and it looks now, Fred, as though you had made sale of the whole lot, instead of a single pair of them, as, of course, I am responsible to you for their value."

"Well, Mr. Lindley, we are not discussing that side of the case just now, though, if it will relieve you to know it, I may state that there is considerable doubt in my mind about your having any responsibility at all in the matter. But what we want to know is where the diamonds have gone, and it would please Mr. Sloane, I imagine, to know also something pointing toward the person who took them. While we have only a selfish interest in the value of the jewels, Sloane, you know, has, in addition to a slight interest therein, as indicated by the amount of his reward if they are found, also a professional interest looking to the capture of the thief. Is that about it, Sloane?"

"There is some truth, Mr. Hopkins, in what you say, and, as time is of great importance in these matters, the quicker we commence looking into it the better show we shall have to make any headway in what looks just now like a somewhat mysterious case." And Sloane put on a serious face, as he quietly arose from his chair.

"Suppose we go up-stairs and look over your rooms a little, Mr. Lindley," said Sloane.

Mr. Lindley acquiescing, led the way, and we all went up, nothing being said by either of us until we reached Mr. Lindley's apartments.

These rooms were at the back of the house, while Kate's apartments, upon the same side of the hall, were at the front. They each comprised a large sleeping room with boudoir attached, the two sets communicating by a door between the dressing-rooms. This door just now was open, as Mr. Lindley had left it when he passed through to secrete the jewels.

## CHAPTER V.

SLOANE took in the whole situation in his quiet, professional way. I carefully searched for any trace which should lead up toward solving the mystery, and kept an eye on Sloane. I had about concluded that we should find no clue there to encourage us, when Sloane began questioning Mr. Lindley.

"Are you sure, sir, that you locked the drawer

after placing the box of jewelry in it?"

"Quite sure, and that I placed the key in my pocket, both acts being quite unusual on my part."

"And you found the drawer locked on your

return?"

"Yes, sir, and remember distinctly taking the key from my pocket and unlocking it."

After a moment's thought, Sloane stepped up and taking the key from an adjoining drawer and substituting it for the one which Mr. Lindley had left in the rifled drawer, vainly attempted to insert it in the lock. It would not work at all, and, after satisfying him-

self of this fact, he replaced it in the lock from which he had removed it.

It seemed to me that Sloane went through this performance more for the purpose of killing time while he was studying the case, than with an idea of getting any clue from this source. For, supposing the key to have fitted the lock, it would be ridiculous, I thought, to further suppose that the thief had used this key, and, after securing the booty, had so carefully relocked the drawer and replaced the key. Still I had great confidence in Sloane and knew that discoveries which might seem to outsiders as most trivial and without bearing, to men in his line were often of great value, and led to most important results.

Sloane next proceeded to a most careful examination of the lock and its surroundings, turning the key back and forth, listening to the throw of the bolt; looked into the keyhole and at the outside woodwork about it, but failed to make any discoveries, as was evinced by his remarking to Mr. Lindley that he "could find no evidence of the lock having been tampered with. It had probably been simply picked with a wire, or opened with a false key. The latter was the most likely, as the culprit would not have been apt to linger, after securing the

diamonds, long enough to relock the drawer with a wire, which would necessarily take some time." By what fancy, or for what purpose the drawer should have been relocked at all he did not see, "but the circumstance was quite unusual," and, he also thought, "of slight consequence."

As he turned from the bureau, noticing that the lower sash of a window alongside of it was raised, he remarked, in a casual manner, to Mr. Lindley, "I suppose this window is just as you left it on going out before the robbery?"

Mr. Lindley seemed quite taken aback at the question, and hastily answered, glancing at the window.

"No, sir, I never open that window myself, even on the warmest nights, there being plenty of means of ventilating the rooms without it. As it is in a direct line with my bed, and, as I am a little inclined to rheumatic twinges at times, I am careful about draughts, especially at night. Besides, as you will perceive, there is directly beneath that window, the roof of a porch over the back door of the house, which renders the window easily accessible to thieves; hence, I always keep it closed and locked. No, sir, although I have not thought of it before, in fact in my excitement have not noticed that it was

open, I can assure you that it has been raised by some one since I left the room on my way to breakfast. As I gave orders, upon discovering the robbery, that nothing should be changed here, it follows that the window was opened while I was at the table."

Mr. Sloane's growing interest was apparent as he said, "I suppose in airing the rooms after you leave them in the morning this window, like the others, is usually opened for a while? Whose duty is it to attend to that?"

"Well, I have never given any instructions to anyone concerning the window, but, as the lock upon the sash works very stiffly, as you can see, it is my opinion that it is not often used. As there are plenty of other windows which can more readily be used for such purpose, I hardly think it is customary to open this one. My daughter has charge of such matters, and, if you desire it, I will send for her to answer the question."

"Never mind just now, sir," said Sloane, apparently attaching little importance to the matter;" I may want other information from her, and this can be deferred until later."

Sloane went to the window, put his head outside and examined the roof of the porch, which was but a few inches below. After completing his examination he withdrew his head and lowered the sash. Upon trying the window fastening, which he found very difficult to move, he smilingly observed to us that "a little oil upon it would help it, if it was desired to have it in working order." He then made a survey of the yard in the rear, which ran back to the stable and carriage-house fronting on the next street, and occupying the full width of the premises. Being situated upon a corner, the side street line of the house was continued in a brick wall some seven feet in height. In this wall there was a gate opening upon the sidewalk.

"That gate is kept locked I suppose? the officer said, rather unconcernedly.

"Always, I think," replied Mr. Lindley. "It has a spring lock, the key to which is in the care of the servants, by whom the gate is used in passing to and from the house. There is a bell pull upon the outside for the use of other persons who may have business at that part of the house."

"Anybody live over the stable? I see curtains at the windows there."

"Yes, Dan, my coachman, and his wife.

"What kind of persons are they?"

"Of a very good kind, we think, don't we, Mr. Hopkins?"

I nodded approvingly and Mr. Lindley continued:

"Dan is an Irishman who has been with me for a long time, in one way and another. We formerly had him at the factory, among the horses, and, finding him a most careful driver and a good horseman, as well as a very steady, honest kind of man, I brought him here to replace my coachman, whom I found inclined to drink too much at times. Dan has been with us here for nine or ten years and we are proud of him. His wife appears to be a very good sort of a woman. She does our laundry work in the house, and, though she does not come so much in my way as Dan, I think I may say she is a faithful servant. My daughter thinks so, and, as she comes under her charge, she is best able to know."

"About this girl Winnie, who was meddling with the jewelry in your daughter's room, and whom you did not suspect of anything serious, how long have you known her, Mr. Lindley and what is her record, so far as you know it? inquired Sloane in an offhand sort of way as he continued looking about the room.

"Winnie has lived with us only a short time, comparatively, a year or so. My daughter heard of her through one of her acquaintances, who was

quite interested in her and her mother. I don't know much about it myself, but believe there is something about a widowed mother with a good for-nothing son and a young daughter, hard work to get along with the son unwilling to assist in any way but to help dispose of what small means his mother and sister can get hold of. This friend of Miss Lindley is charitably disposed, one of the few young ladies of these times who, from a sense of duty, go out of the usual course to discover worthy objects of sympathy, if not of charity. She came across this case and the result was that Winnie was installed here in the capacity of seamstress and maid. Miss Lindley took kindly to her at once. She has never been used to much work, being still young, and her father at one time, I hear, having been fairly well off. She is perfectly honest and trustworthy so far as I know. I did not exactly like the look of the affair with the earrings, but I can as yet place no connection between her actions there and their later disappearance."

"Very naturally you cannot, sir, and I do not say that I can. It would be a very boldly planned piece of work which we should hardly look for in one so young and apparently unskilled in crime, especially as she would know that your first suspicions would point to her.

More bare-faced crimes have been committed by persons as innocent appearing as your Winnie, sometimes of themselves, but oftener through accomplices. I don't want you to think that I expect to find the thief in Winnie, nor in any one else with her assistance. Not at all, Mr. Lindley. We are a long way off from success yet, which fact compels us to look into every incident or circumstance in any way connected with the case, and follow it up for whatever there is in it. Winnie's part in the mystery will need some attention, it may be only to prove her entire innocence, in thought or action, but, believe me, just now it will not pay to drop her entirely. Excuse me for talking so much, but sometimes I can't help it," and Sloane looked as sober as if he had imparted something of great importance, by accident, which his succeeding inquiries might either confirm or modify.

"What other servants are there in the house?"

"Two only, Mary the cook and Jerry her son, who acts as a general servant," replied Mr. Lindley promptly, "neither of whom could have had any hand in or knowledge of the crime," confidently.

"For what reason, sir?" quietly asked Sloane.

"Firstly, because no amount of diamonds

would tempt either of them to betray my confidence in, and esteem for them. Why, my dear sir, if old Mary has been so long in my household, as confidential and trusted servant, that I could safely leave my purse in her charge while I made a tour in Europe, giving her the responsibility here in my absence, which lasted over a period of two years, with full charge of of the house and its contents and inmates, the latter including my two young children; if, I ask, I could do this with perfect confidence in her loyalty and honesty, and find on my return that I had not mistaken her in any way do you think I could ever suspect her of having a hand in the abstraction of these paltry diamonds?"

The old gentleman, as he warmed up in defense of his tried and faithful servant, soon convinced me, as he must also have Sloane, that any suspicions pointing that way would not hold. Continuing more quietly, he said:

"I have the same confidence in her boy, Jerry. He has grown up from a child in my family, and has, instilled in his mind, that feeling of satisfied dependence so characteristic of the colored race. He has been trained by his mother to look upon us as his best friends, and, without ever testing

- Tare

his honesty, I have the same faith in him as I have in Mary, which you are aware is quite unlimited. But my second reason for asserting that they had no part in the theft will probably have more weight with you, Mr. Sloane, as it is not to be expected that you will share my warm feelings of friendship for them. They were both below stairs at the time of the robbery. Mary in the kitchen and Jerry in his place as waiter at the table. He was still in the dining room attending to his duties, where, after discovering the loss, I went down to hurry him off with the note summoning Mr. Hopkins."

As Mr. Lindley anticipated, his latter state, ment seemed to clear both of them of any suspicion in the mind of the officer, and, after nquiring as to the other occupants of the house, and learning that they consisted only of Mr. Lindley, his son and daughter, Mr. Sloane stood a moment in thought and then said:

"It will be necessary to see some of these people, your daughter especially, but, before doing so, I should like to see the safe in which the jewelry was kept during the night."

"It is in the passage here," said Mr. Lindley as he stepped out, followed by Sloane and myself, The safe, which was of small size, stood in a recess off a passageway leading from the main hall to Mr. Lindley's rooms. It was used merely as a place of deposit for small articles of value, in the way of ornaments and relics not often used or worn, and as a receptacle for important documents and papers belonging to Mr. Lindley. On reaching it and finding the door closed, Mr. Lindley grasped the knob to open it, but, to his evident surprise, found that it was locked.

"My daughter appears to have locked it," said he, "and, as you probably wish to see the inside of it, I will call her and have her open it, for, to tell the truth, I am unable to do it myself. It has a combination lock and Kate has full control of it. I have never bothered myself about it, not even knowing the figures upon which it locks, but depend upon her to obtain for me anything within it which I way want. It is rarely opened, however, even by her."

"I do not think it will be necessary to open it all, except to discover that everything is all right inside, as there is no chance of finding the diamonds in there," replied Sloane with a smile. "But I should like to know when it was locked, and now, if you choose, you may send for Miss Lindley to enlighten us upon this, as well as some other points."

"Suppose we go down to the library, where she will join us," said Mr. Lindley.

"One moment, please," returned Sloane, as he quickly passed into Mr. Lindley's room, and stepping to the window over the porch, made a close examination of both sashes, in the vicinity of the metal fastening. After raising the sash again, he came toward us, with, "Now I am ready, we can go down at once." Mr. Lindley leaving us to proceed alone, went off to summon Kate, and together they reached the library a moment after we had entered.

Kate came directly up to me with hands extended and a roguish smile upon her face.

"Well, Fred, your diamonds are gone, notwithstanding your caution to me about burglars, and that I put them in a safe place over night at least. As I never dreamed of a visit from them by daylight, I relaxed my vigilance, and the result I suppose to be, that you wild hold me responsible for the loss of them, as threatened. I am not rich, you know, but I guess papa will settle for them and withhold the amount from my allowance until he is repaid the loan, will you not papa?" This was said as soberly as if it were meant. Without waiting for his reply, she continued:

" I am so glad the burglars did not get my

earrings with the rest. I put them in my ears before breakfast, and thereby caused myself to be made the subject of Pierre's jokes, but, ever since the robbery, I have been congratulating myself for wearing them, and were it not wicked, believe me I should turn the laugh upon. Pierre when he comes home and learns of the robbery.

"But seriously, I am terribly nervous over the affair, and shall almost be tempted to wear all my jewelry hereafter to protect it. You will observe I still wear the earrings. How do they look, Fred?" I didn't stop to tell her how becoming they were, nor how bewitching she appeared in looks and manner, as she tossed her head from side to side, and from those dark snapping eyes shot glances at me which neither the circumstances of our meeting, nor the presence of the officer could restrain; but turned at once to business, and introduced Mr. Sloan as an acquaintance of mine connected with police affairs.

"Oh, yes, I know. Papa told me of him, and that he desired to question me about some matters regarding the affair. Let us be seated." And in her graceful girlish way she motioned toward several easy chairs, as she seated herself upon a sofa. "Now I am ready, but as I know

so little of this affair which papa has not already told you, I do not see that I can be of much service to you, sir."

This to Mr. Sloane in a cool, dignified way which it was difficult for me to believe possible with her, who always appeared so frank and unreserved in manner.

Apologizing for the necessity for his troubling her at all, Mr. Sloane began politely questioning her in an easy, conversational way. Her responses were quick and to the point.

"First, Miss Lindley, as to the safe. When you took the jewelry out to carry it into your room do you remember closing the safe door and locking it?"

"I do not, sir, but as it is always my habit to do so, I think it quite likely that I locked it. It requires no key, you know, a turn or two of the little knob securely fastening it. But why do you ask? Did you find it open?"

"No, Miss, but if I had I should have considered it a quite natural condition, under the circumstances. You did not find it open then, as you might have left it, and closed it upon your father's discovery of the loss?"

"No, sir. Papa told me to have everything up stairs left as it was until your arrival. If the safe door had been open, however, I think I should have noticed it, as I passed close to it in going down stairs from papa's room."

"That will do for the safe at present, but before I leave I wish you would open it, just to satisfy us that its contents have been undisturbed. Now, Miss Lindley, what are the duties in the house of the girl Winnie?"

"She does plain sewing for me and assists in taking care of the rooms."

"Is it her duty to open the sleeping room windows in the morning, for the purpose of airing the rooms?"

"Yes, sir, and she usually does that, and the other necessary chamber work, while we are at breakfast."

"Did she open them this morning?"

- "I have been so excited over this affair of the diamonds that really I have not noticed whether any of the windows are open or not. If she had opened them you would have found them still open when you arrived, as neither Winnie nor anyone else has been upstairs since our discovery."
  - "By your orders?"
  - "Yes, sir."
- "Is it customary with her to open all the windows at this season?"
  - "Of that I cannot speak positively, although

it is my opinion that, with the exception of one window in papa's room, she is apt to throw them all open. The catch upon that one works so hard that she complained to me of the difficulty of moving it, and I told her that, until it was remedied, she might keep it closed."

"That is the window alongside the bureau

and over the back porch?"

"Yes, sir."

"From what you know of this girl have you any reason to doubt her being perfectly honest and trustworthy?"

"Not at all, sir, on the contrary I have the greatest confidence in her, and would trust her

in any way."

"Does she know that the diamonds are missing?"

"Yes, sir, and so do all the servants, exceptting perhaps Dan, the coachman, and his wife."

"How did they find it out?"

"I told Winnie myself, as I met her in the hall immediately after the discovery. Papa told Jerry something about it when he sent him down town with the message, I believe, as when I went down stairs a few minutes ago I found him and his mother discussing it, and they both eagerly asked me for particulars about it."

"What do you think of Winnie's actions in

your room as witnessed by your father?"

"That thinking herself alone, and dazzled by the beauty of the ornaments as most young girls would have been, she allowed her curiosity, or vanity if you please, to get the better of her judgment. Nothing more, I assure you."

"How did she act when you told her of your

loss?"

"She was greatly agitated, in fact she seemed considerably excited before I told her, but, remembering how papa had caught her unawares, and thinking that she must suspect something wrong from our actions and whispered conferences, I did not wonder at it."

"Where did she pass the time while you were at breakfast, as for some reason she appears not to have aired the rooms or performed any other usual chamber work this morning?"

"In her room probably, though why she should have neglected her duties I cannot say. It is something quite unusual for her."

"Does she ever have visitors here?"

"Occasionally her mother calls to see her, and once in a great while her brother comes here. With these exceptions she has no company, and she seldom goes out, except to visit at her mother's."

"This brother of hers, who you say sometimes comes here, what do you know of him?"

"Nothing only that he is a lazy, worthless fellow, living upon his mother and sister. Winnie seldom mentions him to me as she can say no good of him."

"What brings him here, do you suppose?"

- "I fancy that he comes to get money from Winnie, although she has never told me so. She always appears flurried after he has been here, and as she does not apparently relish his visits, I can see no other object in his coming. She seems heartily ashamed of him, and, I think, would give him almost her last penny to keep him away from the house. They were not always poor, and Winnie is proud. I am so sorry for her; and yet she seems quite happy here with us."
  - "What is her brother's name?"
- "Richard—Richard Evans. The family is English I believe, though they came to New York when the children were small."
  - "Do you know where they live?"
- "Yes, sir; but I cannot give you the address, as I forget the number. I called there once with a friend, at the time I engaged Winnie, now nearly two years ago. It is in East—th Street not far from Third Avenue."
  - "It does not matter, Miss Lindley."

Sloane here took a small memorandum book

from his pocket, and, after making a few hurried entries therein, said, as he replaced it and rose from his chair.

"Now, Miss Lindley, if you will oblige us by accompanying us up stairs, and perhaps answer one or two questions, I will release you from any further trouble on my account at present."

"No trouble at all, sir, I assure you," replied Kate, smilingly. "I am only too glad to do my part toward solving this mystery, but am afraid that I am proving a quite unimportant witness."

"Of that we cannot yet judge, Miss," said Sloane respectfully, without showing in looks or manner whether he had learned anything of value or not.

## CHAPTER VI.

Arrived up-stairs, Mr. Sloane called Kate's attention to the fact that the only window which was open was the one that was supposed to be closed, and, in a quiet way, to the condition of all the rooms, which were just as they had been left by their occupants in the morning.

Kate flushed a little at this latter illusion to

the untidy appearance of things.

"I don't understand it at all," she said. "I never noticed anything about the rooms when I came up with papa, in my excitement hastily looking over my bureaus, dressing-case and closets to see if anything but the diamonds had been taken."

" And you discovered—?

"Nothing missing. Everything in the way of jewelry, money or valuables of any kind was in its usual place. So with my dresses and everything else that I could think of. It seemed strange, because nothing was locked up, and there were many things which could have been taken as easily as the diamonds,

my jewel-case for instance. In papa's room I found the same state of affairs, excepting that he had disturbed things a little in his search for the missing jewels. Is it not a singular case, Mr. Sloane?"

"Rather so, I admit, and fortunate for you that it is, I take it," responded Sloane, while Mr. Lindley gave utterance for the first time to any opinion he may have formed, by saying that it looked to him as if the theft had been committed by some one who knew of the diamonds being in the house, and had gone no farther than necessary to secure them only. This view of the case had been mine for some time and, I think, also Sloane's, for, although we had not been told that nothing but the diamonds was taken, we must have inferred such to be the case from the fact that the loss of nothing else was mentioned, and all investigation, so far, was on their account.

"This window which is so difficult to open, Miss, how do you manage in washing it?"

"Oh, Jerry washes all the windows, and he is strong and probably opens it without much difficulty."

" Is it often washed?"

"As often as necessary, I think, though not as frequently as those at the front of the house,

not being so much exposed to dust. But really, sir, I don't wonder at your asking that question, for I should judge on closer inspection that a little soap and water would improve it." And Kate laughed heartily over what she considered Mr. Sloane's joke at her expense, while he, poor fellow, never having intentionally perpetrated a joke in his life, apologized in a most bungling way, being taken completely off his guard by Kate.

"I didn't mean that, you know, Miss Lindley. I think the glass is remarkably clean and bright, at least compared with some that I have seen, but I wanted to know whether it had lately been washed in order to fix another circumstance in my mind," and Sloane began to settle down to business again.

"Well, really, I can't say just when it was cleaned, but certainly not within a week or two,' said Kate.

"That roof under the window has been recently painted, I see, Mr. Lindley. About how long since it was done?" said Sloane.

"About a month or so," replied Mr. Lindley.

"You have a burglar alarm attached to this window, I see."

"Yes, sir, and to all the lower openings of the house, and to the stable."

"Is it in good working order?"

"Yes, sir, I think it is."

"Not like most of them, then, Mr. Lindley As far as my knowledge of them goes they frighten people oftener by false alarms than by truthful announcements of attempted robberies. May I see the indicator attached to the alarm?"

"Certainly, sir. You will find it in my dressing-room there."

After looking at the machine and its attachments, Sloane returned into the room, saying, "That alarm has no connection with this case I notice that it has a clock attachment which automatically throws it out of use at six o'clock in the morning. Of course, if the apparatus was in working order this morning, it was disconnected several hours before this robbery occurred, and consequently any tampering with the doors or windows while you were at breakfast would not be indicated upon it."

"Certainly not, Mr. Sloane."

After standing a few moments in thought, Sloane requested that the boy Jerry be summoned. Mr. Lindley rang for him and he came in presently, looking uneasily around the room and at its occupants.

Mr. Lindley informed him that the gentleman,

indicating Mr. Sloane, wished to talk with him a little, and Jerry, bowing politely, first to his employer and then to Sloane, waited, somewhat nervously, for him to begin. Sloane, who had carefully scanned the youth as soon as he entered now, scarcely looking toward him, and in a very reassuring way, said:

"Jerry, your mistress informs me that you generally wash the windows here. Now can you tell me when you last washed that one next the bureau? Whether it was before or since the roof beneath it was painted?"

"I washed it week before last, I think it was, sir, at any rate it was a week or more after the roof was painted, because, before I went out on it, I tried the paint, and it was dry and hard." said Jerry, who was recovering himself under Mr. Sloane's gentle manner.

"Then when you wash that window on the outside you stand upon the roof?"

"Yes, sir, it's handier than sitting on the window-sill, like I have to with the rest of them."

"I thought that was about it, Jerry. That will do for the window, I guess. Have you seen the coachman this morning?"

"Yes, sir, he was in the kitchen a while ago."

"Nothing unusual about that, I suppose?"

"Oh, no, sir, he often comes in there."

"Did he know anything of the diamonds being stolen before you told him of it, for I suppose, of course, you did tell him?"

"Yes, sir, I did after he told mother and me something kind of queer about Miss Winnie's

brother."

"Ah! indeed," and Sloane began to show more interest. "What was it so queer about him?"

"Dan said he saw him come into the yard, through the side gate, this morning, and go down into the basement. In a little while he saw Winnie almost pushing him down the back steps, and he went out of the gate in a hurry, and ran down the street like mad."

"So then you thought he might have had something to do with the diamonds, and told Dan about them. Did he agree with you?"

"I don't know, sir, but I know he don't like that Richard. He told me to tell Mr. Lindley what he saw."

"Well, Jerry, you can go now," said Sloane,

hurriedly dismissing him.

As soon as he had passed the door, Sloane requested Mr. Lindley to call the coachman at once.

"I don't know that there is anything in it,

but if there is, there is no time to waste in getting at it." These latter remarks to me while Mr. Lindley was hurrying after Dan. "Miss Lindley, will you oblige me by joining your seamstress, Winnie, down-stairs, and keeping her with you until I may call her, provided I wish to see her?"

"With pleasure, sir, though I have no fear that she will try to run away," replied Kate, with some hauteur, rising and preparing to leave.

"Possibly not, Miss," said Sloane politely; but in such matters it is always best to go very cautiously. Unless she starts the subject herself, I would advise that you do not discuss the robbery with her."

Kate, promising compliance, withdrew just as her father entered the room ushering in Dan.

I knew Dan very well, as I had for years, and, as intimated by Mr. Lindley in his praises of him to the detective, I liked him. He was a cool-headed, steady-going Irishman, somewhere of middle age, with a frank, open countenance, ruddy complexion, and a pair of twinkling, gray eyes lighting up a face which, when I first knew him, was positively handsome, and was yet far from ugly. His hair, which was clipped close to his head, was sandy in color, matching

his long English chop whiskers. Rather under the medium in height and weight, he was built like an athlete, with good figure, deep-chested and square-shouldered. In his neat livery, when seated upon the box with reins well in hand and whip at proper poise, he was a model coachman in looks, which his skill in horsemanship and graceful dexterity in driving in nowise belied. We were all proud of Dan, and he was proud of his position, and, though given to sly humor at times, was most respectful on all occasions.

As he entered the room and Mr. Lindley motioning toward the officer, explained the reason of his visit, Dan appeared just the least bit nervous, but soon recovered himself.

"Jerry has told us," said Sloane, "that you saw some person enter the street gate this morning. Did you recognize that person beyond doubt?"

"Sure, sir, I'd niver mishtake that loafer."

"Who was it, Dan?"

"Who else, sir, but the fellow they call Richard, the brother of Miss Winnie, the seamstress here in the house."

"How do you come to know him?"

"Know him? Isn't it meself has had to throw him out of the shtable a half-dozen times whin he has come loafing around there?"

- "What was his object in visiting the stable?"
- "Divil a bit do I know more nor yourself He pretinded to be wanting to see his sister, and would hang around, shmoking and shpitting upon the floor. Once or twice he had some other loafer with him, so, as I was not shtarving for company, and had an eye to keeping all the whips and things for my own use and the good of the boss here, I jist made it my business to fire him out. I was obloiged to do this so often it got to be koind of tiresome loike, so one day I jist hustled him out of it on the lash of a big carriage whip, and divil a hap'orth of his ugly face have I seen till this morning, whin he come sneakin' in at the gate and wint down the kitchen steps."
  - "What time was that, Dan?"
- "I can't say exactly, but not much off from nine o'clock, I always get around to the house with the coopay at nine to take Mr. Pierre down town, and I had the carriage ready to drive out, and was shutting up the back door of the carriage house whin I seen him as I told you."
  - " What did you do?"
- "Nothing, sir, but jist kape my eyes on the house here for a few minutes, whin, all of asudden, the back door at the top of the stoop below was opened, and out he come again in a big hurry,

and his sister nearly pushing him down the shteps. Out of the gate he wint and down the street on a dead run, as I could hear by the noise of his fect. He looked loike he was being chased by a ghost, and, be jabers, he thraveled like he thought it was gaining on him!"

"Did you mention this to young Mr. Lindley

when he came out?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did he think of it?"

- "He said, 'he thought maybe the fellow had a quarrel with his sister and run away because she threatened to call for help, but perhaps I might mintion it to his father here.' You see, sir, they all feel sorry for Miss Winnie on account of this fellow, but don't loike to mintion him to her."
  - "How do you suppose he got in at the gate?"
- "It's more nor I know, sir, for it's always locked. He must have had the kay."
  - "Where is the key of this gate kept?
- "I don't know, sir, its nothing to me, for I never use it.

To Mr. Lindley. "Will you please find out where the key is kept, and whether it can be found?"

Mr. Lindley went out at once and soon returned with the information that the key was in its usual place, alongside the back basement door.

I think that this news was disappointing to Sloane, who, I imagined, had sent Mr. Lindley for information with confidence that the key would not be found. However, he did not allow it to disconcert him in the least.

- "There is but one key to this gate, I suppose, sir?"
- "Yes," replied Mr. Lindley, "so far as I know."
- "The servants in going out always take it, I suppose?"
- "They are presumed to, although, of course, they might possibly neglect to do so, in which case they would have to ring a bell at the gate or the front of the house to be admitted."
- "Or, begging your pardon, sir," interrupted Dan," come to the shtable and have me let them through that way, as Miss Winnie did last night."
  - "Ah," said Sloane quickly," how was that?"
- "I was sitting in the carriage-house door, shmoking my poipe and enjoying the cool evening air before bed-time, whin along came Miss Winnie with her pleasant face, and said she had no kay to the gate, and, as it was a little late, she didn't loike to ring, so she thought she

would go through the carriage-house way. I jumped up and opened the door, moighty glad to do her a favor, for she is a lady all over, spite of that lazy shpalpeen of a brother."

"What time was that, Dan?"

"About tin o'clock, sir, for I was just afther going to bed, and that is my toime every night whin I am not out with the horses."

"That will do, Dan, for the present."

"Thank you, sir. I wish I could help you some way, sir, to catch the thief, and I am sorry now that I did not do it this morning."

"You did right in letting this Richard go, if he is the person you mean as the thief, as, if we want him, we can easily get him."

"I hope you may, sir, and you won't go astray nayther," said Dan, as he departed bowing to each of us.

It was now past one o'clock, the investigation so far having taken nearly two hours. After consulting his watch, Sloane, turning to Mr. Lindley, said:

"As it will be necessary to get to work in other directions, if you will now let this Winnie appear, I will get through with her as soon as possible and get back to head-quarters. I will say just here that matters look quite encouraging for capturing both the diamonds and the

thief, and, if this girl's testimony turns out as I anticipate, we shall unravel the whole mystery before night."

Of course both Mr. Lindley and myself knew to whom Sloane was pointing as the thief, and as we had the same grounds as he upon which to base our suspicions, we could not but agree with him in his conclusions. Though, if we drew our inferences wholly from Dan's story, we must believe Winnie to be in league with her brother; for, supposing him to have the diamonds with her knowledge, why, if she were innocent and honest, should she help him to escape with them instead of try to detain him. But for one fact, we might have thought that she had discovered him prowling about the house while the family was at breakfast, and, watching him, had seen him steal the diamonds, when pouncing upon him she had forced him to give them up; and, before he recovered from his fright, had got him out of the house as rapidly and quietly as possible. The one fact which stood against Winnie's loyalty and honesty, as suggested by this view of the case, was that the diamonds were missing. Winnie knew that we were aware of this, and that, with the assistance of an officer of the law, we were investigating the manner of their disappearance; still we had no aid from her toward dispelling the mystery, which she could have cleared up at a word.

Admitting that the girl might have a natural desire to shield from harm those who were near and dear to her, for myself, I must acknowledge that I could discover no reason for her to jeopardize her reputation by shielding this cowardly rascal, brother though he was.

Although not a word passed between us, I am satisfied that these were about the thoughts of all three of us at the time Sloane requested Mr. Lindley to produce Winnie, and when she arrived, as she did shortly, the case against her looked bad enough.

## CHAPTER VII.

Or all the people connected with the household I knew personally least of Winnie. I had, in my visits there, caught occasional glimpses of her and had noticed that she was passably good-looking, of good height and figure, fair complexion, bluish-gray eyes and light-brown wavy hair; that she appeared neatly, though plainly dressed, and seemed quite diffident and reserved in manner, giving me the impression that, for some cause, she wished to escape the critical observation of visitors.

Knowing her history, I had attributed this shyness to a sort of discontent with her position in the house. I may have been wrong in this conclusion, but I had Kate's authority for it that she was proud-spirited, and therefore thought that, like other people of spirit, when suddenly driven by adversity from a life of comparative ease into a position of dependence, she inwardly chafed under her enforced servitude.

As she came in now, at first glancing hurriedly at Sloane and myself, then allowed her eyes to drop in a slightly confused manner just as

might be expected of an entirely innocent person, under like circumstances, it was plain that she had nerved herself for the interview, and excepting that she was very pale, there was nothing in her looks or manner indicating the unusual excitement which the events of the day must naturally have produced in one of her temperament.

Mr. Lindley, indicating Sloane by a wave of his hand, told her that the gentleman wished to ask her a few questions, to which her only reply was a graceful bowing of her head to her employer and a quiet glance at Sloane.

Mr. Lindley and I withdrew a little way, and all remained standing during the interview.

Sloane began by saying:

"Of course you know, Miss, what has brought me here, and likewise know that it is necessary for me, in trying to discover how, and by whom the robbery was committed, to carefully examine every incident which may seem to have any bearing upon the case." An approving nod from Winnie. "There are certain circumstances which seem to be capable of explanation by you alone, as you seem to have been the only person of the household who was up-stairs at the time the jewels were taken." Another nod from Winnie, who, up to this time, had not spoken a word, but stood looking fixedly at Sloane.

He at once commenced his inquiries in an off-hand way, and, as he proceeded, frequently changed his position, sometimes walking up and down, his hands in his pockets and his eyes wandering about the room, occasionally, as he rapidly put a question, stopping short and looking the girl squarely in the face.

Winnie on her part treated him most respectfully, answering his questions generally with promptness and in a clear, though very low voice.

He first asked her about the disordered state of the rooms, which she explained, by saying that her mortification at being discovered, by Mr. Lindley, trying on the earrings and his apparent displeasure toward her, as shown by his actions, had quite unnerved her, and she had at once left the rooms which she had entered to attend to her usual duties there. Some time after, as she was on her way to tidy up the rooms, she met Miss Lindley, who, after telling her of the robbery, had instructed her to go downstairs, leaving everything up-stairs undisturbed. About the window over the porch nothing was elicited beyond a confirmation of Miss Lindley's statement that she, Winnie, had complained of the difficulty in opening it, and that Miss Lindley had told her to omit doing so until it was repaired, since which time she had never disturbed it.

"Were you surprised, when you first came into the rooms this morning, at seeing the diamonds upon the dressing table?"

"Not at all, sir; Miss Lindley commonly allows her jewelry to be exposed in that manner."

"But so large a number of valuable earrings must naturally, I should think, have caused you some surprise."

"It might under ordinary circumstances have done so, sir, as the display was quite unusual, but, knowing the conditions under which the diamonds were in the house, I saw nothing unnatural about it."

"Miss Lindley told you of them last night, then?"

"Yes, sir, as I came in to ask her permission to run over home a while I found her examining them, and she told me about Mr. Hopkins having brought them at her father's request for her to make a selection from. She showed me the pair she had chosen and asked my opinion upon her choice."

"You then went out and to your mother's?

About what time was this?"

"I do not know exactly, but somewhere between eight and nine."

"Did you take the key of the gate with you, as I hear it is customary for you to do?"

Winnie showed a little hesitancy in answering this question, but finally said. "Yes, sir."

"Where did you say your mother lives?"

- "I did not say, but she lives at number— East—th St."
- "Ah, not a long walk. She lives there alone with your brother, I believe?"

"Yes, sir."

"Anybody there besides them when you were there last night?"

"No, sir."

"I suppose you told your mother and brother about Miss Lindley's birthday gift?"

"I did mention it to mother, but as my brother was asleep upon a lounge pretty much all the time that I was in the house, I cannot say whether or not he heard what I said. At any rate, I don't remember that he showed any interest in it."

"When you came back here you came in by the gate as usual, I suppose?"

Here Sloane who had been walking back and forth, with his head lowered, and his eyes cast down almost in a line with his feet, suddenly stopped in front of Winnie, looking straight into her eyes. If she had not before suspected

that Sloane was questioning her for some other purpose than merely, as he told her, to have her explain certain points which might appear to bear upon the case, this question must have convinced her that she was under suspicion. As a matter of fact, I believed from the first that she had anticipated this, and was consequently in better form to meet his wily questions. Besides, she must have known that Dan had been put through a course of questions, and would naturally conclude that he had told all that he knew. At all events, beyond a momentary start as Sloane so suddenly stopped in front of her, she showed no especial agitation.

"No, sir; for when I arrived at the gate I found that I had lost the key. Then I went around to the stable and Dan, the coachman, let me through into the yard, as I presume he told you," added Winnie with a rather scornful look at the officer.

"How do you account for the loss of the key? Where did you place it on going out?'

"In the pocket of my sacque, but, as the evening was warm, I removed the sacque when I reached my mother's. It must have dropped from the pocket as I took it off, or in putting it on again before leaving."

"You are sure of this and have not seen it since?"

- "Yes, sir, I have."
- "Indeed, when and where?"
- "My brother brought it around this morning and gave it to me, and I hung it up in its proper place, beside the basement door."

"He used it, I suppose, in entering the gate?"

" I presume so, sir."

These responses I could plainly see were somewhat disappointing to Sloane, as I freely acknowledge they were to myself. If Winnie were telling the truth, and the whole truth, the case against her was weakening; while if she were lying, it was evident that she had had plenty of time to prepare for herself plausible explanations of all the compromising circumstances of which she suspected us to be aware.

"This brother, does he often visit you?"

"Not very, but quite as often as he is welcome."

"Not much love between you, I think, Miss?"

"No, sir; although, if Richard would behave himself as he should, God knows I would only be too glad to regard him more as a brother and less as a trouble to mother and me. Only this morning, making an excuse to come here about the key, he came up to my room, and I was obliged to give him money in order to prevent his making a disturbance here. I finally had

almost to push him out of the house while threatening to call Mr. Lindley. This had its effect and he scampered way."

Thus Winnie had, in her way, explained Dan's story voluntarily, instead of putting Sloane to the trouble of drawing it out piecemeal. She remained perfectly cool and self-possessed. If she were acting a part, she was doing it without a fault.

After one or two unimportant questions, asked in a very respectful manner, and which I thought he improvised in order to regain her confidence, Sloane politely informed her that he could think of nothing further just then which he desired to ask her.

"It will be necessary, however," he said, "to look over your room, as well as those of the servants, more as a matter of form perhaps, than with any idea of discovering the lost property. My duty, Miss, requires this as well as many other proceedings on my part which are anything but agreeable."

"You are perfectly welcome, sir, to any assistance I can give you, in any way," replied. Winnie blandly, and Sloane, turning to Mr. Lindley, suggested making the search immediately.

Accompanied by Winnie they started, while I went down stairs to await the result.

I found Kate in the library, and she appeared pleased at my coming. I could see that, although she was trying to make light of the affair of the diamonds, she was considerably cut up over it; first, because she was directly though innocently the cause of the loss, and further, because she must know that Winnie was suspected of complicity in the theft.

Kate prided herself upon her household man agement, and for one so young she certainly did possess unusual abilities in that line. After her mother's death, for several years the house had been managed by a thorough-going, practical housekeeper, whom Mr. Lindley had directed to instruct Kate as she grew up in the science and mysteries of household economy. Kate took readily to the task, and under her very competent teacher, with an inborn aptitude for it, had progressed so well that at sixteen she had assumed control of domestic aftairs, including the selection of servants. She had experienced considerable difficulty in the latter connection except in the kitchen and dining room, where Mary and her son were permanent fixtures, and had decided, at the time she took on Winnie, to do without any regular chambermaid, dividing the duties in that way, and what plain sewing was done in the

house between herself and Winnie. She told her father, when he remonstrated with her, that there was hardly enough work about it to furnish her with necessary exercise, and, besides, it would make the situation easier for Winnie, to whom she seemed to take a liking on first acquaintance. As she was accustomed to having her way in such matters, and as he could see no real objection to the arrangement, Mr. Lindley made no further opposition.

As shown by her statement to Sloane, Kate had unlimited confidence in Winnie, in fact had made almost a companion of her, and I was sure that it would require strong proofs to induce Kate to lessen her belief in her faithfulness. It was not for me to undertake the task, in any event, and, as I was not as confident myself that we were upon the right track as I had been previous to Sloane's examination of the girl, I responded to Kate's anxious inquiries as to the result of our interview with Winnie with evasive replies. I told her that the affair was somewhat mysterious as yet, but that Winnie was not clear of suspicion; acknowledged that she had made a pretty good case in her own defense, but, as there was no proof as yet available as to the truth of her statements, of course we had only her word to rely upon.

"And a good reliance it is, Fred, at least I have always found it to be so."

"No doubt you have Kate, and that you should believe in her truthfulness under present circumstances is excusable perhaps, as it is certainly meritorious on your part. For myself I have no positive opinion to express. From any point of view the affair to me is as mysterious as ever. But, excuse me, I hear Sloane and your father coming. Perhaps they may have something new."

"Well, Mr. Hopkins," said Sloane as he came in, "we have made no discoveries, and as the diamonds are evidently not in the house here, unless they are locked in the safe upstairs, which it seems only Miss Lindley can open, I must hurry around to head-quarters and start things working from there. Will you go with me, sir? as without losing any more time, I desire to talk with you a little. Not to leave anything undone here, however, I should be pleased to have you go up, Miss Lindley, and look the safe over before we go. We will await your return here."

"Wouldn't it be too funny if the diamonds should be there?" laughed Kate, as she started to leave.

<sup>&</sup>quot; More serious than funny I should say, as it

might involve the necessity of confining some one in an insane asylum until she should recover her wits," retorted Mr. Lindley rather petulantly. The affair was evidently beginning to disturb his usual good temper.

Of course nothing came of the search in the safe, Kate reporting everything there as she had left it in the morning, and I signified to Sloane my readiness to accompany him as proposed. Mr. Lindley cautioned the latter to keep matters as quiet as possible, as he did not fancy the notoriety which a publication of the affair would create. Sloane promised to let them know immediately if any further developments were made, and it was agreed that we should both return to the house for further conference at nine o'clock in the evening. Pierre would then be at home, and his views of the case might possibly be of service to us. Mr. Lindley was going down town immediately after lunch, on business of his own, and would be at Pierre's office, where he would explain matters to him.

## CHAPTER VIII.

SLOANE did not talk much on the way down in the cars, but upon our arriving at head-quarters, after a short interview with his chief, he invited me into a private room and we went over the case together.

I found pretty soon that despite Winnie's plausible story, and her calm collected manner during her examination, Sloane firmly believed in her guilt; that she was either implicated with her brother in the theft, or that, knowing him to have stolen the diamonds, she assisted in his escape from the house with the booty.

"There is no other construction to be put upon her actions. Of course she makes up a good story to tell us, knowing where our suspicions lie, and knowing also just what led us to have such suspicions. I don't think that she knew about Dan having seen her brother enter the house by the gate, and her hurrying him out by the back door; but she didn't dare to take any chances on that after I caught her a little off her guard about losing the key and coming

in by the stable. She surmised that Dan had told all he knew, and she was not quite sure how much that might be, so she rattled off the latter part of her story without interruptions by me and made things fit together very nicely. It was well done, I admit, but she had time enough to prepare herself, and I am not much surprised at the result. She is a keen one, but I have assisted in bringing just as sharp ones as she is to grief, and with less show than I have in her case."

I could see much good reasoning in Sloane's views, but yet, remembering Winnie's previous good record, could hardly bring myself to believe her as artful, deceitful and wicked as his language implied her to be, and told him so.

"I am not surprised, Mr. Hopkins, in fact should be more surprised, if, with your supposed knowledge of the girl, you should be easily convinced of her guilt. In my capacity as a detective I must drop any fine feelings of sentiment (if I ever have any) and study circumstances and people from a matter-of-fact point of view. My calling, sir, is not one calculated for charitable, kindly disposed sort of people to follow."

As the truth of this remark was so self-evident it required no comments from me,

"Now let me explain some other incidents in this case which may help to convince you that I am not so far off the track after all. My first impression as to the robbery was that it had been committed by a professional burglar, as I did not attach any importance to Mr. Lindley's discovery of the girl trying on the ear-rings. But later discoveries drove that idea out of my mind, and convinced me that the diamonds were taken by or with the assistance of some one living in the house. No professional thief would ever have unlocked that bureau drawer, and, after taking the jewels, have so carefully relocked it. Nor would he have limited his booty to the diamonds alone when there were so many other valuables within reach. How should he have known that the diamonds were in that drawer, even if he knew they were in the house? There was only one solution to the question, which, to my mind, gave any sort of color to the professional theory. The thief might have entered the house by some means before the family had gone down-stairs, and, remaining in concealment, have seen the diamonds secreted by Mr. Lindley. But if so, he must have entered the house between six and say eight o'clock, as Mr. Lindley tells me it was somewhere about eight o'clock when he

went down to breakfast. As the burglar-alarm seems to be in working order, it would have indicated any attempted entrance before six o'clock, at which time it would cease to work. As the servants were by that hour moving around the lower part of the house, while some of the people up-stairs might reasonably be supposed to be awake, if not already up, (in fact both Mr. Lindley and his son were up, as he tells me) a thief entering at such time would have to take more chances of detection than such people like to risk.

"Then there remains the evidence of the open window in Mr. Lindley's room. That is the strongest link in the case against the girl, and shows the cool, deliberate manner in which she performed her part of the robbery, and tried to throw us off the scent."

"How is that, Mr. Sloane?" I inquired eagerly, for I had kept that window in mind as indicating the means by which the thief had gained entrance, and it was really a strong point with me in Winnie's favor.

"That window was opened by the thief, Mr. Hopkins, but it was done from the inside and not, as you imagine and I at first thought, as a means of entering or leaving the house, but to give us a false clue. The colored boy, Jerry,

and the paint on the roof of the porch helped me out of that."

"In what way?" I asked, getting very much interested.

"The new paint don't show a scratch, excepting close to the house, where the boy stood upon it while washing the window. No person could clamber over the edge of that roof, going either up or down, without leaving some marks or scratches upon the paint. In addition to this, there are no marks showing that the metal fastening has been tampered with, and you can believe, from the stiff working of it, that it would take considerable force to move it by operating with a knife-blade between the sashes. That is the plan generally adopted by thieves when they do not remove any glass, and the evidence of it is always plainly seen upon the woodwork or the fastening itself. Yes, sir, the girl or her brother opened that window. It was a pretty cunning piece of work, as far as it went, but, like many cases which I have come across, where studied attempts to mislead pursuit have been employed, it has only served to furnish additional evidence against the culprit."

"How do you explain the locking of the bureau drawer?" I inquired.

<sup>&</sup>quot;Not at all, unless that it was an accident,"

he replied at once. "You see, sir, the locks upon ordinary articles of furniture are usually very plain and simple, and it is quite a common thing to find a key which will open many of them, sometimes a single key answers for a whole chest of drawers."

"Yet with Mr. Lindley's bureau you found that not to be the case," I said.

"True, and I tried that key to make sure. The trouble with it was that it belonged to a finer lock than that which the thief opened, and, as you saw, it would not even enter the common lock. If Mr. Lindley had locked the diamonds in the drawer from which I took the key, it is my opinion that they would still have been there when he came to look for them. Either the girl or her brother had some ordinary drawer key which fitted the lock, and opened it without much trouble. In withdrawing the key, after securing the booty, the drawer may have been accidentally locked."

"Well, Sloane, you appear to make a pretty clear case against these people, I must confess," I said, after a moment, as he seemed to have finished. "Now, how are you going to proceed?"

"First, I want to see this likely brother, and, if things turn out as I hope, he should be here

very soon. The chief has sent a couple of men around to arrest him, if he is at home, and to search his mother's rooms for the jewelry."

"Do you think, that, after so long a time has elapsed since the theft, either will be found there?"

"As to the man, yes, but as to the diamonds, no. This fellow, Richard Evans they call him, is not a known thief. He is probably only a lazy, loaferish kind of a chap who won't work for a living as long as his mother and sister will keep him in a home, and furnish a moderate supply of pocket money for him to spend in beer and tobacco among others of his kind. Such a life naturally leads on to something worse, and then we have more interest here in keeping track of the gang. He comes of a little better stock than most of his fellows, and consequently aims a little higher in his ambition to steal than do the others, with whom tilltapping and sneak-thieving in a small way will serve as a beginning."

"Then you acknowledge a sort of aristocracy even among thieves?" I said, considerably amused at Sloane's way of putting it.

"I am obliged to," he replied. "Why, a firstclass cracksman will no more mix with a pickpocket, or a successful forger or counterfeiter with a common thief, than will one of our 'crooked' aldermen or indiscreet bank presidents or cashiers with criminals of a lower grade than themselves, whom they may meet behind prison bars, or 'enjoying the freedom of Canada.' This Richard, like his sister, is poor and probably proud. He heard her describe the diamonds to his mother, or perhaps to himself, and, either of himself or with her connivance, planned to get them. The gate key may have been accidentally dropped upon the floor, or it may have been purposely placed in his possession.

"At all events, barring a slip or two, their plans worked all right, and Richard, aided by his sister, got the diamonds. Or, he may have planned it out alone, after finding the key, and getting into the house, ran across his sister, and being opposed by her, may have threatened her in some way, and thus, by frightening her, have obtained, if not her assistance, at least her promise of secrecy. This latter is the most charitable view I can take of the girl, and even at that she must either have shown him where the diamonds were secreted or have opened the drawer herself under threats from him. During my whole questioning of her, though she showed no outward signs of excitement or emo-

tion, as even innocent persons sometimes will, in a similar position, yet I could see, that, beneath the surface, there was something held back which her very plausible story did not account for. She knows I do not believe in her, and you will find out, Mr. Hopkins, when this case is cleared up, that I am right, and that she has not told everything she knows about it."

"It looks that way, Sloane," I replied, "but, unless you find the diamonds upon one or the other of them, I doubt if you ever convince Miss Lindley of Winnie's guilt. By the way, you have said nothing as to your views upon the disposition of the diamonds, and, as I am more interested in them than I am in the capture of the thief, I am anxious to know what prospect we have of securing them."

"Our people here are now hunting the pawn shops and purchasers of that kind of goods and will probably come across them somewhere, or at least get information of them, and before long. Richard undoubtedly has disposed of some, if not all of them, before this, and it being his first great offense, he will be afraid of his shadow for awhile."

"Why do you think your men will find him at home?"

"Because he has had time enough to sell or pledge the diamonds, and will want to get somewhere to conceal the money obtained for them. He is new to the business, and probably not acquainted around the usual hiding-places of thieves, and he will likely hide himself and the money about home for awhile. It is time we heard from there." Sloane had hardly finished speaking when, in answer to a tap upon the door, he jumped up, and partially opening it, had a short conference with some person outside. Closing the door again, he turned toward me with a self-satisfied look, and said:

"Well, sir, we have got him, and he will be here in a moment." And, surely enough the door presently opened again, and the superintendent came in accompanying a young fellow, who, though a stranger to me, I could readily believe was Winnie's brother.

He looked to be about twenty years old, was rather undersized in height, but of solid, blocky build. His light hair was cut short, and his upper lip was only part concealed by a weak apology for a mustache of somewhat sandy hue. He had eyes of similar color and natural expression to those of his sister, and there was something in the general cast of his features which one could easily construe into a resem-

blance to her. But, beyond this look of family connection, there was no similarity of either appearance or manner between them. His irregular, dissipated habits were already telling upon him, in his eyes, which were heavy looking and dull, in his face, which showed the smooth, shiny, puffy appearance so common among beer-drinkers, in his uneasy, nervous manner, causing him to be fidgety with his hands and legs and to keep his jaws constantly in motion upon a quid of tobacco in his mouth. Notwithstanding an air of bravado which he was trying to assume, he had a scared look about him, and showed, I thought, that he felt himself in a bad fix.

He was examined at length by the superintendent and Sloane, in my presence, and, to my surprise, notwithstanding his apparent discomfort and uneasiness under their masterly questioning and cross-questioning and wily attempts to draw something additional out of him, he repeated Winnie's statements concerning his visit to the house in every detail. He hesitated often over the questions, and tried to shirk some of them. This was especially the case with questions pertaining to his forcing money from his sister, and to her threatening to call upon Mr. Lindley to eject him. At this point

21 1

he volunteered the statement that he had gone directly home from Mr. Lindley's, and had remained there until his arrest. He appeared to gain confidence in himself as he proceeded, and when the officers had finished with him, I could see an air of triumph about him which, I thought, boded no good to him. I feared that it would magnify his ideas of his own cleverness in this his first experience with the police. His examination over, he was taken out of the room by the two officers.

At his request, I remained until Sloane returned, which he did after considerable delay. I soon learned from him that nothing had been found either upon the prisoner or at his home, which implicated him in the theft, but that they were going to hold him at head-quarters quietly, pending further developments. No reports had yet been received from the officers sent out among the pawnshops and dealers, but it was hardly time to expect them yet.

I judged by Sloane's humor that he was disappointed at the result of the interview with Richard. He appeared indisposed to talk much, and I got the foregoing information in brief replies to my questions. Finally, I asked him bluntly whether or not Richard's statements had changed his views of the case any, to which

200

he answered, rather pettishly: "No, sir, not in the least, but if we had arrested the girl first and kept her out of the way, we might have saved ourselves some trouble."

"Why," I asked, "what has she done?"

"Done? Why, as soon as we left the house, she hurried right over to her mother's, saw her brother and fixed up his story for him," he answered vexatiously.

"How do you know that?" I asked.

"Why, as our men got to the house they saw her hurrying away, at least they saw a woman leave the house whose description tallies with the girl's. Besides, they had nearly got the old lady to acknowledge that she had been there before the son cautioned her to keep still, which he did at once when he saw what they were driving at. I suspected, when the fellow first began to answer our questions, that he had been posted in his sister's story. Of course, it is too late now to remedy the matter, but if I had suspected that she would be up to any such games, I should have instructed the men to arrest her if they found her in the neighborhood. Her visit may also account for our failure to find either the diamonds or money there," added Sloane.

"How?" I inquired,

"By her having taken charge of them herself and carried them away with her. You remember Richard said that he went straight away home this morning after being hustled out of the house by his sister, and had not left there again previous to his arrest. Though I placed no weight upon his statement at the time, I now believe that part of his story to be true, and, that, in place of his disposing of the diamonds outside, he still had them when his sister came around to caution him against us, and that the diamonds went back to Mr. Lindley's house with her."

Sloane made this announcement very earnestly, and, in a somewhat excited manner, emphasized his thorough reliance upon this new aspect of the case. Not fully comprehending the drift of his deductions, and somewhat taken aback by the sudden change in his views, I said:

"But how do you account for such action on Winnie's part, supposing you to be right in your suspicion?"

"In either one of two ways," he replied, resuming his usual coolness and self-possession. "The girl, having no reason to fear a further search at the house, thinks quite naturally that they can be safely secreted there until, the ex-

citement over, the theft having subsided, they can be otherwise disposed of. This is one way of accounting for her running so much risk in transferring them to her own keeping. The other way of explaining it, and the one in which just now I fully believe, is this: that Winnie, seeing her danger, and that of her brother, has also seen the folly of longer concealing the diamonds, and, having secured them from her brother, by exaggerating his danger, will return them to Miss Lindley, if she has not already done so, with some sort of explanation, part true and part false, as to how she came to recover them. In doing this she must criminate her brother, but she will do her best for him, and the result will be that Miss Lindley will believe all she tells her, show great pity for her in having such a scapegoat of a brother, and, shedding tears in sympathy with Winnie's at the disgrace she pretends to feel over the affair, will end it all by going to her father with the diamonds, and, convincing him of Winnie's faithfulness, beg him as a favor to herself not to push the case against Richard. Mr. Lindley, seeing that the diamonds are restored, and to avoid any publicity of the scandal, for Winnie's sake, is prevailed upon to give his assent, and everybody is happy.

"It is not the first instance of the kind which has come into my experience. Though not the most agreeable ending to be desired, it is one which it is not in my power to prevent."

As Sloane proceeded he grew warm and decided, and I saw that he was confident of the correctness of his opinion, which certainly did seem to be based upon evidences suggesting its soundness. Without expressing either approval of or dissent from his views, I said:

"I suppose then you have nothing to do but to return at once to Mr. Lindley's for a verification of one or the other of your theories, either of which should result in the recovery of the diamonds to make it hold good?"

"That would at first seem the proper course to follow, but a little reflection will show you, as it does me, that it is better for me to stay away from there until the appointed time this evening. If the girl is concealing the jewels (which she would only risk doing in the belief that her visit to her mother was not known to me) they will be safe for some time to come. If, as I believe, she has restored them, why, of course, my services will be no longer required. I shall keep my appointment and, if my prediction as to the surrrender of the jewels shouldnot be verified, it will be time enough then to make another search for them. If such search is

necessary I will bet a big apple that it will result in my finding the diamonds. In either case you see I consider the affair as good as settled. We shall hold the fellow Richard pending the result, as we don't propose having any more conferences between him and his sister, though, for myself, I don't think there would be any danger of that, even if he were at liberty. Still, it is best to keep on the safe side. Any little slip just now might cause us much trouble."

Looking at my watch I discovered that if I were to meet my mother at the store, as I had promised father I should do, it would be necessary for me to be off at once. Rising to go, I congratulated Sloane upon his hopeful view of the case, but added laughingly that I should feel better satisfied on my own part when I got possession of the diamonds.

"Well, Mr. Hopkins," he said, as he shook my hand, "I am not much given to boasting of my abilities, nor of my powers as a prophet but I tell you candidly that I should be willing, for five dollars, to guarantee the truth of my prediction that, at our meeting to-night at Mr. Lindley's, the mystery of the diamonds, will be solved in one of the two ways I have mentioned."

"I hope so, sir, and can assure you that if it so turns out you will be amply rewarded for your services. Good-bye, then, till to-night."

## IX.

I HURRIED around to the store and found my mother awaiting my arrival rather anxiously, as it lacked but a half hour of the time for the steamer to leave. Father, having left the store some time before to attend to some little purchases for their comfort on the trip, had left her there for me to escort to the boat, where he would meet us. I sent one of the clerks out to find a carriage, which took some time and, by the time we started, we had only about fifteen minutes in which to drive to the pier, nearly a mile away through streets crowded, at that time of day, with vehicles of every description. Good-natured bantering of the driver as to the qualities of his horses and the promise of an extra fee for prompt driving resulted in our reaching the boat just as the gang-plank was about to be hauled off. Father was standing on the deck at the passage-way, looking considerably worried, and I had only time to pass mother over to his charge, bid them both 'goodbye 'and wish them a pleasant journey as I was warned off the boat, reaching the dock just as the plank began to move and the lines were cast off.

Returning to the store I looked over what letters had arrived in my absence, properly disposing of such as father had left for me to attend to, glanced over the sales of the day and at whatever new stock had arrived from the factory; in fact, busied myself in a general way over the various details of business requiring my attention. Nothing of any special importance appeared to have occurred during my absence excepting that our head salesman, Mr. Watson, had stopped in for any further instructions which I might have for him, before leaving upon his regular trip to Boston and other eastern cities, and for which his stock of jewelry had previously been selected and packed. I was a little sorry at first that I had not arrived before he left, as I had in mind some special patterns which I wished to add to his assortment. But, when I happened to remember that a considerable part of those goods was included in the lot which had so mysteriously disappeared up at the Lindley's, I concluded that it was perhaps as well, after all, that he had gone. If I should recover the diamonds that evening, as Sloane predicted, I could send them after him, by express, without

much loss of time. I intended to have told father all about the robbery, but, as I had no opportunity of doing so, concluded that it was just as well that he should not know of it then, as it would in some degree interfere with the pleasure of his trip. I knew that the house would lose nothing even if the jewelry were not found, as, from my knowledge of Mr. Lindley, I was certain that, if the diamonds were not forthcoming within a reasonable time, he would insist upon paying us the full value of them. Legally, perhaps, he was not responsible to us, but I knew that in considering the circumstances connected with the theft of them, he would feel in honor bound to make good our loss, even though the diamonds were left at his house voluntarily by me and partly to relieve myself of their care.

No person at the store was aware of the loss, nor for that matter of my having taken them away with me. No entry had been made of them, excepting that I had made a memorandum of them, by their marks and numbers, in a private book of my own. I said nothing to anybody about them, and, though I felt considerable anxiety over the matter, concealed my feelings as well as possible, so that I am sure none of the clerks suspected anything as having gone wrong.

I felt relieved when, in an hour or so after my return from the boat, and the day's business being concluded, I set off on my way up town.

I had eaten nothing since breakfast, and, now that the day's excitement was over, was feeling the effect of my long fast in a famishing appetite. I stopped in at a restaurant and ate a hearty meal, washing it down with a small bottle of *Chateau Margaux*, after which, considerably refreshed in mind and body, I proceeded to my quarters at the hotel, where I passed an hour or so in quietly smoking and ruminating over the incidents of the day.

My faith in Sloane was strong, and he seemed to have worked out a very ingenious solution to the mystery, but despite all that, I found myself somehow lacking the full confidence in his theory which he himself appeared to have. I could find no weak points in it, it appeared to cover all the plain facts as well as the more mysterious and contradictory incidents and circumstances of the day, but still I could not attribute Kate's faith in Winnie, through thick and thin, to a girlish sentimentality such as Sloane had indicated. I knew Kate too well for that. The responsibilities which she had assumed in her girl life had made a woman of her at an early age. Of

a lively cheerful disposition naturally, she had taken her cares lightly enough, but yet she had a matronly way about her in the business affairs of the household which one would scarcely look for in one of her years and disposition. That she had been associated for nearly two years with Winnie without learning something of her nature, I did not believe, nor could I agree with Sloane, with all his experience, that Kate did not have good grounds for her trust in the girl. Kate had seen considerable of society and not a little of the world, in numerous summer tours about the watering places, accompanied by her father and Pierre, was quite a student of human nature, and could see the weak side of an individual as quickly as any person I ever knew. Yet, if Sloane's deductions in the case in its present aspects were correct, Kate's confidence had all along been most sadly misplaced; while she had allowed her sympathies to overcome her better judgment, I could believe it possible for Winnie, in a fit of envy, contrasting the wide difference in position between her fortunate young mistress and herself, to have been suddenly blinded by the glare of the diamonds, and, perhaps, to have stolen them, without much thought of the consequences which might follow such action. But, that she should have connived with her brother, for whom she had neither sympathy nor affection, in thus robbing her best friends, denoted a state of depravity and wickedness in the girl which it seemed to me she could not, for so long a time, have concealed from Kate.

But further speculation upon the case seemed useless, as I should soon know the result of Sloane's predictions.

## CHAPTER X.

At the appointed time I appeared at Mr. Lindley's, and, being admitted by Jerry, was scarcely within the hall when Kate, coming from the parlor hurriedly, came toward me with her finger on her lips and, whispering to me that there were some callers in the parlor, requested me to go into the library and wait for her, as she had something of importance to tell me. She "would not be long detained by her friends," she thought, "as they had already been there some time." She seemed flurried and excited, more so than I had ever before seen her, I thought, although, as she turned to go back to her callers, she appeared to restrain her feelings. I went into the library, picked up an evening paper and seating myself began looking it over. I could not get interested in the news however, as Kate's words and manner had so impressed me that I could not concentrate my thoughts upon anything else, but kept turning and folding the sheet, glancing here and there through its columns, in continual expectancy of her coming.

I was inwardly amused at Kate's mysterious secrecy, and enjoyed in advance her discomfiture when she should learn that her startling developments were not at all unexpected by me. Sloane's predictions then must have been verified and Winnie had restored the stolen diamonds. For the details of the story I should have to await Kate's coming. It seemed to me her callers would never leave. I wondered what especial subject of gossip or fashion in dress could so interest them, when presently, I heard their voices in the hall as they departed, and Kate, in a moment, came in looking relieved.

"Has Sloane arrived yet?" I asked her, as I arose to meet her.

"Yes," she replied. "He just now came in, and is up-stairs with papa."

"Shall I go up or will they come down here?" I inquired.

Hesitating a moment, she answered me:

"You would better remain here, as I have something to talk about with you. As you may wish to see Mr. Sloane before he leaves I will give orders to that effect, if you desire it."

Not understanding just what this remark im-

plied, I said:

"I expected to meet him here this evening,

as you know, and certainly shall disappoint myself and him if I fail to do so."

"All right, I will see that neither is disappointed," she replied as she left the room.

Returning in a few moments, now visibly excited, she came toward me, with her hand in her dress pocket. As she withdrew her hand I saw that it contained a photographic card which she handed to me, face downward, as she said, with considerable emotion:

"Fred, please read what is written upon the back of that card and then tell me what you think of it."

Taking it from her I quickly read what follows, written with pencil in a hurried manner, but unmistakably in Pierre's hand:—

## KATE-

As neither you nor father appear to be proper custodians of the diamonds, I have taken charge of them, to prevent them falling into the hands of some less worthy person. You will probably never see them again, but, as you had your pick out of them last night, you will not miss them. If Fred calls, before you see or hear further from me, you may show him this. Perhaps he will understand it better than you or father.

PIERRE.

"Where is Pierre?" I inquired mildly, endeavoring to suppress the look of surprise which I felt my face must show, "up-stairs with your father and the officers?"

As I collected myself the idea had struck me that this was a joke of Pierre's which he had already explained to his father and sister, and of which he was now giving Sloane the particulars.

"Oh, Fred, how I wish he were," she replied, quiveringly. "Neither papa nor I know any more where he is than do you, only that we know that he has gone away somewhere." Here she could no longer restrain herself, and her voice was broken with sobs, while her eyes filled with tears, as she looked up into my face appealingly and added: "But perhaps you can tell us something of him. Is it not possible that you may have met him somewhere, or that he may have sent you some word which will explain his very strange actions?"

I was not yet in any state of mind to try to quiet or reassure her, as my own excitement had grown as she proceeded, until, as she closed by appealing to me for comfort, I was just beginning to feel the full force of the shock to my nerves which her words had produced. Hesitating for some time in order to recover myself

finally, without answering her questions, I inquired:

"Where and when did you get this mes-

sage?"

With an effort she calmed herself sufficiently

to reply.

"It is quite a long story, Fred. Let's sit down; I have been in such a turmoil of excitement and anxiety throughout the day that I begin to think from my feelings that, like other people, I must have nerves, a fact which has never been made so apparent to me before. But, excuse me, I think I hear your friend Sloane coming down-stairs. I will send him in here and wait elsewhere for his departure before continuing my story."

As she rose to go, brushing the moisture from her eyes with her handkerchief, I asked her if Sloane knew anything of Pierre's message, to which she replied:

"Nothing whatever, nor of anything associated with it. Papa and I concluded to keep him in ignorance of it. But he is here. Make your interview with him as short as possible. I am so impatient that I can hardly wait for him to go."

Sloane stepped quickly in, and, walking up to me, grasped my hand warmly. He declined a

seat, saying that he had no occasion to tarry, only stopped as he heard I wished to see him. He had nothing new to report except that he had been paid off and dismissed, at which he appeared to show no surprise, but rather seemed pleased.

"It is not my business you know, sir, to question the motives of people who employ me. The least said about that the better. You know what I predicted this afternoon as the result of my investigation of this robbery. A part of that prediction was that the girl, finding the pursuit getting too warm for her, would surrender the diamonds, and that my services would be no longer required. The latter part of my prophecy having been fulfilled, you can judge as well as I as to the correctness of the balance of it. At any rate I have nothing more to do with the case except to return to headquarters and have that fellow Richard discharged, as there is no one to appear against him. I congratulate you upon the recovery of your diamonds, which, for all I know you may already have received; if not you probably will as soon as I am out of the way."

I tried hard to smile, as I answered:

"I have not yet seen them, but hope as you say that I soon may. I thank you heartily,

Sloane, for your industry in this case, and shall remember you in any future business which I may have in your line."

"Thank you, sir, and good-night."

Kate came in immediately, and seemed quite herself again as she seated herself beside me upon a lounge at the back of the room, and at once began her story, which, as nearly as possible, I give in her own words, omitting any of the interruptions to which I subjected her at the time, in the way of comments and questions suggested by the various incidents of the recital.

## CHAPTER XI.

"Just before you left here this afternoon you will remember that, at the officer's request, I went up and opened the safe, to satisfy him that the person who stole the diamonds had not secreted them there and then locked them in, so that neither he nor she nor anybody, excepting myself, could ever get them again. It struck me as so ridiculous that I could not restrain the remark I made upon going up of 'how funny it would be if I should find them there.' Of course, I did not find them and so reported.

"When I pulled the safe-door open something fell out upon the floor, but I paid no attention to it until afterward; as I locked the safe I saw an old photograph of myself lying there, face up. Knowing then that it had fallen from the safe, and wondering for a moment how it could have gotten in there, as I could not remember placing it there, nor think of any motive for my so doing (as it is a horrid likeness and scarcely worth preserving) I just slipped it into my pocket and soon forgot all about it.

"Shortly after lunch I was sitting in my room up-stairs, thinking over the unusual event, of the day, when Winnie come to the door and asked me if she might come in, as she wished to talk with me. Of course I assented, and, as she came in, looking so pale and miserable, my heart went out to her, and seizing her hand I drew her toward the sofa upon which I was sitting, and after she was seated, asked her what I could do for her."

"'Nothing at all, Miss, I am afraid,' she said, but I thought that before I was taken away from here it was my duty to see you and tell you what is on my mind, connected with those diamonds which have been the cause of so much trouble.'

"'If you mean by what you say, Winnie, that they will take you away from here on account of your having had anything to do with the loss of the jewels, let me assure you that there is no danger of that, at present at least, as I will interfere to prevent any such injustice., I replied.

"' I thank you, Miss, for your very kind intentions toward me, but you will be powerless, I think, to save me this disgrace. When I tell you what I know of the doings of that officer who was here, you will agree with me.'

"'I cannot believe that it is as bad as you im-

agine, Winnie, but go on with what you have to say and let's hear the worst of it.' I said, trying to cheer her.

"'Miss Lindley, you know I do not have much love for my brother. I believe him capable of doing almost anything, except honest labor, which would put money in his pocket, provided he can do it without much risk of the law. He is none too good to steal, but he is naturally a coward and would see that there was little chance of his being suspected before he would steal from any person who might cause his arrest and punishment.

"'The presence of the diamonds here may have been a great temptation to him, and circumstances which I will mention later on made it appear quite easy for him to obtain them, but, Miss, I can assure you that he is innocent of this crime, that, although the officer has seen evidences which point to him as the thief, I can swear, if necessary, of my own knowledge that he has never even seen the diamonds."

"Winnie was terribly in earnest by this time and I could plainly see was telling me the truth.

"'You must know, Miss, how the officer's visit here has resulted. That he suspects the robbery to have been done by me and Richard

together, and that Richard carried the diamonds off. You may not know that Richard has been arrested and my mother's house searched for the jewels. Why they have not come to arrest me I cannot say, but I am waiting in fear and trembling for their summons. Oh, Miss, I cannot bear this disgrace and have come to you in my grief, as I believe you to be truly my friend, and, though I have no faith that you can save me, I have hopes of convincing you of my innocence.'

"'It will require no effort for you to do that, Winnie, as I have never for a moment doubted you,' I responded, as I pressed her hand. 'But what causes you to think that you are suspected by the officer? I have heard very few of the particulars of his investigation after I left the room. Tell me what you know of

them.'

"'Enough to convince me that, from the first, he suspected me. Although he treated me very politely the very nature of his questions showed me that I was right in my fears.'

"'What grounds had he for these suspi-

cions?" I asked.

"'Strong ones, I must admit, Miss, and it was my knowledge of this that made me dread meeting him. Last night when I went over

home I somehow dropped the key of the gate out of my pocket and did not discover the loss until I arrived back here. As it was pretty late I concluded not to go back for it then, but went around to the stable and got Dan to let me through that way. When Dan was questioned by the officer he told of this as I suspected he might. The officer soon obtained all the particulars of my doings from me, how I told mother of the beautiful diamonds, which you remember you showed me, and told her in Richard's presence, though I really believed him to be sleeping at the time, and of my losing the gate key and coming in by the stable. then told him of Richard's finding the key and bringing it here this morning, which accounted for its being in its usual place. I told him of Richard quarreling with me, and of my hurrying him out of the back door under threat of calling your father. This I did without being questioned, as I suspected that Dan might have heard us wrangling or have seen Richard leaving the house. In that case I was pretty positive that the detective knew all about it, for Dan, though always very kind to me, has no liking for Richard. He has several times driven him out of the stable, as I learned from Richard himself. So you can see that circum-

stances warrant the officer in his suspicions, although I did my best to help my case and save Richard too, for knew him to I be innocent. I think your father and Mr. Hopkins believed something of my statements, but I could plainly see that I had not convinced the detective. Shortly after he left the house I ran around to mother's to see Richard and inform him of my suspicions, and also to caution him to tell the truth when called upon. I found him at home and frightened him considerably with my story. I told him to remain there and await developments, which he promised to do. As I was coming away I saw two persons whom I suspected to be officers near the house and turning as I walked along, saw them enter. I have heard nothing further, but am sure that they have arrested him and searched the house as I told you. Of course, finding nothing of the jewelry there, they will soon be here after me,' and the poor girl as she concluded, looked the very picture of despair.

"'Let them come,' I said bravely. "And they will not take you. Father has something to say about that I imagine, and I will see that he allows no such outrage. Take heart, Winnie, and believe me when I say that no further mortification nor disgrace shall come

to you. I almost wish I had never seen the diamonds, for thus far they have produced nothing but trouble for us all.'

"But Winnie would not be comforted, seemed nervous and uneasy and I thought rather strangely of it, because I considered that after my assurances she really had nothing to fear Finally, without looking at me, she said in a low. voice, 'Miss Lindley, there is something connected with those diamonds which you do not know and of which I had fully determined not to tell you. But, as I cannot see my way out of this trouble by any other course, I have finally decided to do so. Besides, it may be best that you should know it.'

"'What can it possibly be, Winnie, that you should allow it to worry you so?' I asked, somewhat excited and moved by her strange words and actions. 'Something that, though it will clear both my brother and myself of all suspicion, at the same time will, I fear, be cause for grief to you and your father.'

"'I cannot imagine of course to what you may refer, but want you to tell me at once, whatever it may be.'

"'I will, Miss,' she replied, 'but it is an unpleasant task for me. When your father caught me this morning foolishly admiring the effect of the ear-rings and, after giving me a terribly reproving glance, gathered them up and went through your boudoir into his rooms, I, feeling terribly mortified, immediately left your room here and rushed up the stairs on the way to my own room. In going up I met your brother, Mr. Pierre, upon the stairs, and, excited as I was, had nearly run against him before I saw him. I remained but a moment in my room, returning down-stairs to attend to my usual morning work which had been interrupted by my unpleasant experience between your father and the diamonds. As I entered that door leading into these rooms I happened to glance into the mirror over your dressing-table there, and saw reflected therein your brother standing in front of your father's bureau and trying to open one of the drawers. As his actions seemed peculiar, I remained where I was, and, as I was out of his sight, could watch him without fear of discovery. When he found that the drawer was locked and the key removed, he took a small bunch of keys from his pocket, and, after trying a number of them, found one which answered his purpose, and he soon had the drawer open. Taking from it a paper box which I recognized as the one containing the diamonds, after removing the lid and looking into it he placed it

in his breast pocket. Before closing the drawer he searched further for something which he seemed to want and presently drew out a large card, upon which he rapidly wrote something with a pencil, and passed out with the card in his hand. In a few moments I heard him close and lock the door of the safe in the passage. after which he immediately went down-stairs. I was so confused and excited over what I had witnessed that instead of going about my work I again went up to my room to calm myself, but had small chance of doing so before Richard came stealing in, and I had the unpleasant scene with him, which ended in my getting him out of the house just as you and your father came up from breakfast. A few minutes after this I met you in the hall, when you told me of the robbery, and also told me to remain, leaving everything up-stairs untouched until after the investigation.'

"As Winnie mentioned the card and the closing of the safe, the incident of my picking up the photograph flashed across my mind. As she finished her story I quickly drew it from my pocket and saw that the back of it was nearly covered with pencil writing, and you may imagine my feelings when I read what you know to be Pierre's message to me. Hastily

showing it to Winnie, I asked her if that looked like the card she saw in Pierre's hand, to which she replied that it seemed to be of the same size, which was the only way in which she could judge of it. She had not noticed that it was a photograph, but at the distance which she stood from him, and that distance apparently doubled by the reflection in the glass, she could hardly have distinguished it, if it were such.

"I then explained to her something of the message, told her that what she had witnessed and the confirmatory tone of the message, entirely cleared away any evidence of danger to her or her brother, and dismissed her as cheerfully as I could, under the circumstances of this new shock. As soon as she had gone out I rang for Jerry and told him to send papa to me immediately.

"'Mr. Lindley has gone down town, Miss, and said he would not be back before a couple of hours.'

"As there was nothing else to do, I passed the time in brooding over this new turn to the mystery, and had managed to get myself worked up into a pretty state of excitement before papa's return. When he came in I went directly to him and, trying to control my own feelings, handed him the card and carefully

watched him to see what effect it would have upon him. His face, which looked troubled enough when he commenced reading, showed signs of increased emotion as he proceeded, and, as he finished, he looked up and said in a faltering sort of way:

"'Well, Kate, this only confirms what I have feared, from something I have learned since I left here after luncheon; but you have not

told me where you found this card.'

"In as few words as possible I then related what had transpired, how I found the card and carelessly put it away, and how Winnie's statement had been the means of establishing the importance of it. Seeing that he looked much troubled, I endeavored to rally him by suggesting that the whole thing was a joke of Pierre's which would be explained when he came home.

"'Yes, my dear, when he comes home, but when will that be, do you suppose?' he replied

sadly.

"'Why,' I said, cheerfully, 'pretty soon now. He never fails to come home before dinner, you know, when he is in town, without sending us word of his detention!'

"'Iknow, Kate, but I have information which causes me to believe that we shall not have him to dine with us this evening nor for many following ones, I fear.'

Seeing that he was endeavoring to keep something back which was agitating him beyond control, and growing alarmed, I said nervously:

"'Oh, what has happened to Pierre? tell me, papa, at once. I know it must be something dreadful, but please let me know it. Is he—?''

"' No, my darling. I know what you would ask. He is not dead, nor,'-seeing my look of anxious inquiry which he correctly interpreted, 'that I know of, is he in any danger. He is, so far as I am aware, in his usual good health, but, Kate, if I could have had any choice in the matter, I should have preferred to know that he had died in innocence to having these proofs of his crimes accumulate before me as they have to-day!' And poor papa dropped his head, completely giving way to his grief in sobs, while great tears rolled down his cheeks. Though quite unnerved myself, my sympathy for his sufferings gave me renewed strength, and, trying to appear cheerful, throwing my arms around his neck and looking deep into his eyes, I said:

"Papa it cannot be as bad as you seem to fear; bear up and tell me what you have heard or seen. You know you always rely upon little Kate, as you still persist in calling me, to help

you over difficulties. Come, out with it, and I will warrant you that it will relieve you.'

"So, pressed by me, he finally consented, and I soon learned the cause of his trouble. As he is waiting to advise with you about it, I will not repeat what he told me, but must confess, Fred, that after he had finished, I found slight grounds of comfort for either him, or myself. You would better go up and see him and if you desire to talk with me further you will find me here on your return."

I judged by Kate's words that she desired an interview with me after I had heard her father's statement, and so replied:

"All right, Kate, I shall want to see you again," and, putting out my hand which she grasped quite tenderly, I left her.

## CHAPTER XII.

On reaching Mr. Lindley's rooms I found him sitting in a great easy chair, his head resting upon his hand in a meditative sort of way. As I came in he arose and greeted me in his usual courtly manner, though a close inspection of his features showed me that Kate had not exaggerated the effect which his troubles had produced upon him. His face wore a stern expression unusual to him, the corners of his mouth were drawn down, and his eyes had lost some of their brightness. As he spoke I could detect a slight tremor in his voice, although he pitched it in a very low key. It was plain to see that it was no ordinary excitement which had so affected a man of his powerful physique and iron nerve.

Motioning me to a seat facing his, he began speaking as soon as he had resumed his chair, at first trying to assume an easy manner, but soon succumbing to his feelings he grew considerably excited as he progressed.

"I have sent for you, Fred, as the nearest

friend of Pierre and also because you are a favorite of my own among his acquaintances. There are no other persons whom I can recall, outside of my family here, to whom I should wish at present to confide what I feel it my duty to tell to you. Although I think there can be no explanations given which will change my view of the circumstances which I am about to relate, your close intimacy with my son for so long a time may perhaps aid you in discovering motives for his actions of which I am ignorant. It is hard, Fred, for me to have to acknowledge at my time of life that the hopes and promises in the early life of a favored son have not been fulfilled. That, instead of being allowed to remain in assurance that this son would continue to justify my faith in him, I must conclude so suddenly that he has betrayed my trust in him. That, instead of living in hope of his future high standing in his profession and among his fellow men, I must come down to the acknowldgment of the hard fact that he is a defaulter, a common thief, and that the victim of his crimes is his father. I see that you would have me modify the terms, but what is the use? Soft names for such acts will not lessen their enormity and, as I am a practical man, Fred, and used to plain speaking, I

may as well put it to you just as I see it. As I have sat here alone this evening, pondering over the developments of the day, and comparing my early struggles and hard knocks and dependence upon my own efforts for whatever success I should attain with the very opposite of this, as exemplified in the life of my son, I have been more than ever convinced of my mistake, in being induced to give him a professional education, in place of compelling him to make his way in the world, upon his merits, in some practical business. As you know, Fred, I have been most indulgent with him in money matters since he was a boy. I have always had the fullest confidence in him, seldom questioning him as to his expenditures, satisfied that he had no bad habits or questionable companions. I have put myself upon an equality with him and tried to encourage in him a feeling of independence; told him that my purse was for the mutual benefit of myself and children, to be used liberally in proper ways, but with an eye to the fact that, as my fortune was not that of a Vanderbilt, there was a necessity of our keeping within bounds.

"Never but once have I had to express disapproval of any action of his, in a financial way. From what I have learned down town to-day, I

think that such disapproval, which he has wrongly construed as a refusal on my part to assist him, has led him to take the fatal steps, which, besides making a felon of him, have caused him to fly from home and from friends whose confidence he has so shamefully betrayed. I see you start again, Fred, as though you think me too harsh, but when you hear all, you will be astonished as I am crushed at the evidence which compels me to believe my son a thief.

"Last evening Pierre came to me in a conused sort of way and said that he feared he should need my assistance in a few days to the amount of some five thousand dollars. As I could not imagine what use he could so suddenly have for so round a sum, and noting his worried manner, I expressed considerable surprise at his request, and asked him what occasioned the demand. He then told me that some three months ago he had indorsed a note or that amount to oblige a friend of his, young, Clark, Walter Clark, I believe is his name. It seems Clark needed the money in his business and pending the settlement of a sale of some property in the interior of the State, induced Pierre to lend him his name, assuring him that it was a mere form, that he would have the money for the land long before the note came due, and that Pierre would never hear anything further from it. It seems there is a hitch in the transfer, that Clark has not received the money and that the chances are strong of Pierre being held for the amount of the note.

" I felt annoyed at Pierre and plainly told him so, and that I did not see that it was my duty to pay the debts of his friends. I further said that, as he was worth nothing in his own name, of course he had nothing to lose in this case, but cautioned him of the danger of following up a custom of indorsing for his friends. I did not flatly refuse his application, but I think he got the impression that I would when the time came. That was the view I wished him to take of it, so that Clark might stir himself and raise the money. If he failed to do this, and the note should be protested, I intended to see Pierre out of it, without his being troubled. I thought it a good time for both of the boys to take a lesson which might benefit them hereafter. Besides, Clark is good for the debt and I should lose nothing in the end. Before retiring, I asked Pierre if a certain company had paid him any money on my account within a day or two, to which he replied in the negative. I thought rather strangely of that, as this money,

some \$10,000 is a quarterly instalment of royalty on my most important patent under which these people are the only manufacturers, and they are usually very prompt in payment. The money was due on the first of May and, as it was the third of the month, I had looked for Pierre to bring it up for the past two days. The payments are made at his office, where all the papers pertaining to my business of that nature are kept. Pierre and his partner, Mr. Blakely, continue to act as my attorneys, in which capacity I have always employed the latter, an old friend of mine, as you know, since I first had occasion for legal advice in my transactions. When I was down town this afternoon I dropped in at the city office of the company using my patent, and, after a general discussion of business affairs with the managers, I said to them that, if convenient, I wished they would let me have the quarterly payment which was due, as I knew of a profitable investment in which to place it. The treasurer at once apologized for the delay, by saying that he had been called away from town for a day or two, but, that upon his return this morning, had himself taken a statement of the quarter's business and the money which it called for around to Pierre's office. He showed me Pierre's receipt for the payment

which amounted to something over eleven thousand dollars, a very good quarter's business for all concerned. Of course this was a satisfactory explanation to me, and I left feeling in very good humor. After attending to some other little matters, I arrived at Pierre's office at about four o'clock and found Mr. Blakely there. After passing the usual compliments of the day, I inquired for Pierre.

"'There,' replied Blakely, 'I am glad you came in, as I fear I might otherwise have forgotten the message which he left for me to send up to you. Pierre has been suddenly called away on some private business, and expects to be gone for some days. He told me this in a hurried manner, as he was preparing to leave, when I returned from luncheon, and requested me to send you word, as he had no time to do so, having to leave at once to catch the train. He did not say which way he was going, nor did I think to ask.'

"I thought it nothing remarkable, as you know it is not unusual for him to go away on business connected with the firm, still I could not conceive of any private business which he could have requiring his absence for so indefinite a time. I told Blakely I was glad I had called for besides relieving him of the necessity

of sending me a message, I could also relieve him of the responsibility of longer holding the money which had been paid in this morning on my account. He looked up surprised and seemed in ignorance of what I was driving at.

"'What money do you refer to, Lindley?' he said, 'I have no recollection of any being

paid in for you for some time.'

"I then told him what I had learned before coming there.

"'Well,' he replied, 'If you saw Pierre's receipt he must have received the money, I suppose, but I am positive it has not been paid in while I have been in the office. It probably came in while I was at lunch, and, in his haste to get away, Pierre forgot to mention it to me. If so, it should be in the safe.' And he got up and searched for it, but without success.

"'Strange,' he said, 'Pierre must have carelessly stuffed it in his pocket and forgotten it. Those people always pay in greenbacks, and, although usually in notes of large denominations, still it makes a bulky package to carry.' And Blakely was right. It is their custom to pay in money instead of by check, a peculiarity with them which I never understood. As they are a solid concern, their checks are as good as gold, but, as they for some reason of their own

seem to prefer making these payments in money, I have never questioned them as to their motive in so doing. I was considerably provoked as well as surprised over Pierre's apparent thoughtlessness, as he is usually most business-like in all such matters. But, as there was nothing to do but to await his return for an explanation, I left the office and came immediately home.

"While riding up the street I got thinking the matter over and then for the first began to see that Pierre's actions denoted something more than mere carelessness in regard to the money. It was hard for me to bring myself to believe this, Fred, but the more I pondered over it, and turned it in my mind, the more firmly I became convinced that my suspicions were correct. I tried in every way to put a better face upon it, then to convince myself that it was cruel in me to doubt the high sense of honor which had always manifested itself in my son, and wicked for me to admit the thought that he could, under any circumstances, be induced to betray the confidence in which I held him. But there were the strange facts of his sudden departure, without imparting any cause therefor, either to his partner or myself; the mysterious disappearance of the money, which he had no reason

to suppose I knew him to have received, and, finally, I recalled our conversation over his indorsement of young Clark's note, and, in some way, connected that with his actions. By the time I arrived here I was pretty well mixed up in a state of doubt and fear, but when Kate showed me the card containing Pierre's message to her, which I suppose you have seen, and told me the particulars of her finding it and, what Winnie had witnessed, how could I doubt longer that Pierre was a thief?"

As he finished he drew a deep sigh, and showed in his downcast eyes and quivering lips the effect which his belief in the guilt of his son had produced upon him. I pitied him from my heart, and, though I was almost crushed myself by his rehearsal, I still tried to rally him by assurances that it could not be so bad as he had pictured it; that, though I could not yet see entirely through all Pierre's actions, I was hopeful that we should have an explanation from him which would make everything clear without loss of honor on his part. But, as I really had nothing substantial to offer him to justify me in these views, I did not succeed in altering his conclusions. Seeing the hopelessness of further argument with him on the subject, I turned the conversation in other channels.

Asking him about the dismissal of Sloane, he told me that he had no trouble in that direction, as the officer apparently expected such action on his part. "He has no suspicion, I think, of the new turn of affairs, but imagines that Winnie has made some sort of a confession and restored the diamonds; that Kate has interceded for her and her brother, and induced me to decline prosecuting them. I gathered from his conversation, in hints thrown out by him. I did not dispute the correctness of his conclusions, rather encouraging him to believe that he had guessed the truth, paid him a good round fee for his services and instructed him to discharge Richard, as I should not appear against him. He left seemingly satisfied with his pay, and confident that he had accomplished a clever piece of detective work.

"Perhaps I did wrong in not telling him of my discoveries and retaining his services in the pursuit of my son, but, Fred, I have not yet determined whether such pursuit is advisable, and, therefore, thought it best not to acquaint him with this new phase of the case."

"You did right, sir," I replied, "for, although Sloane and his chief will still think Winnie and her brother guilty, no harm can come to them, and at the proper time we can explain matters to the officials. This matter must right itself in some way before long."

"It is kind of you to say so, Fred, and I know that you feel the force of what you say," he said, rising and grasping my hand, "but for me, can only see in the affair the damning disgrace into which Pierre, in his rashness, has led not only himself but also his family. With regard to the diamonds, Fred, I will see that you are paid for them as soon as I can settle myself to attend to business."

"Do n't mention that now, Mr. Lindley." I said, "that is an after consideration, and does not now interest me in the least. Neither father nor any of our people at the store know anything of the loss, and, as father will not be in town for about ten days, I shall keep the matter to myself until his return. In the meantime some satisfactory ending to the mystery may be arrived at, obviating any necessity for me to let him into the secret at all. So please do not let that part of the affair disturb you."

Remembering my promise to see Kate before I left, and as it was getting late, I expressed a hope that, after sleeping on the matter, he would take a brighter view of the situation and, bidding him good-night, withdrew.

"Well, Kate," I began, as soon as I rejoined her, "I have heard your father's statement and, while I must acknowledge that he has some grounds for his suspicions against Pierre, I do not see the justice or propriety of his condemning him so strongly without further evidence than he now has. I can see that, to a man of your father's fine feelings of honor, the least deviation from a strict course of rectitude, on the part of an only son, must be most humiliating, and he has my sympathy in his sorrow. But, I cannot yet bring myself to believe that Pierre has done anything either criminal or dishonorable."

"Oh, Fred," she replied warmly "it does my soul good to hear you say that. I knew that you would not condemn Pierre without the strongest proofs of his dishonesty, that you would not allow yourself to be prejudiced against your own convictions of his strength of character, even by papa whose confidence in him seems so sadly shaken. For myself, I must admit that papa's terrible earnestness in his belief had partly converted me to his views, but your words have reassured me and, though I can give no reason for the feeling, I have a consciousness that we have wronged Pierre by our suspicions. I do not expect that you can offer

any explanation for his strange actions, as, in the whirl of excitement through which we are passing, calm thinking would be out of the question for you, as well as myself."

"That's just it, Kate," I said. "When we get our wits again perhaps some solution of this mystery will suggest itself which now, in our unsettled state of mind, is out of the question."

"I forgot to mention, Fred," said Kate, in quite a cheerful tone, "that I received a letter from Grace Hartwell this afternoon, in which she writes that she is coming to the city with her uncle, in a few days. Mr. Hartwell is called here upon business which will occupy his time for several days, and Grace will make her head-quarters here. I am to expect her on Saturday morning."

I was glad on Kate's account to hear this

pleasant news.

This Miss Hartwell was a charming girl whom the Lindleys had met some years previously on one of their summer jaunts, and in whose company and that of the family of the uncle mentioned they had traveled together, here and there, for a couple of months. The young ladies had formed a strong attachment for each other, and were in the habit of exchanging visits at each other's homes. Miss Hart-

well was an only child and an orphan, worth half a million in her own right. She was the ward of her father's younger brother, a widower with two or three growing children, and resided in Boston at the home of this uncle. I had met her frequently when she was the guest of the Lindleys, and had assisted them in entertaining her, by relieving Pierre, in escorting his sister while he paid his devoirs to Miss Grace, upon numerous rides and drives, in visits to the opera and art galleries, and in attendance at an occasional little reception. I had for some time thought that there were signs of a feeling considerably stronger than that of friendship on the part of Pierre toward Miss Hartwell, which, with a little more encouragement on her side than I had yet noticed, I fancied might lead to an ultimate betrothal.

I thought her the handsomest young woman I had ever met. Some two years Kate's senior, tall and rather slightly built, though not at all 'thin,' she was the very personification of ease and grace either in motion or at rest. A well-shapen head, and a neck neither short nor slender perfectly poised upon full sloping shoulders, with well developed bust and arms of perfect shape, long, tapering waist and an erect, graceful carriage, gave to her figure the air of a

queen. She wore her masses of light golden hair loosely arranged, little fluffy locks of which seemed to have escaped and floated at will over her broad high forehead. Her full deep eyes of clearest blue were captivating in their brilliancy, and, in conjunction with rather full, cherry colored lips, which, try as they might, could not conceal the rows of perfect teeth beneath, gave her an expression almost bewitching. Add to these charms a pink and white complexion, a clear and rippling voice, a hearty whole-souled manner, without ostentation or affectation, a strong intellect carefully cultured, and you have something of a picture of her, as I knew her. That Pierre should have become enamored of her seemed to me only a natural consequence; whether he would succeed in securing her affections I had my doubts. Not that it would not be a desirable alliance on her part, for Pierre was a man whom any woman might be proud to claim as a husband; but it seemed to me that Miss Grace, not unmindful of her charms and her fortune, knew that she was something of a prize in the matrimonial market, and, although not strictly a flirt, was a little given to coquetry. Though seemingly so light-hearted and frank in disposition, she was a woman of discernment, and, having been

brought up to know of the worthless would-behusbands of handsome heiresses floating about in society, evidently meant to keep clear of such excrescences, in fact of any entanglement of a sentimental kind while, as then, she could get so much good out of life in her untrammelled condition. I could see that she was pleased with Pierre's attentions, and had a high opinion of his merits and position, but I did not see that she evinced, in the many little ways so often apparent to close observers of these things, any signs of exceptional interest in him. But woman is sometimes hard to read and I might be far from right in my views.

When Kate told me of her contemplated visit, I was pleased for several reasons. Although three days must elapse before she would arrive, the anticipation of her coming would keep Kate in better spirits and give her some thing to think of besides her own and her father's troubles. Then, if there should be no solution to Pierre's strange actions before her arrival, Miss Hartwell would be a desirable confidant and adviser to Kate in her sorrow. I congratulated Kate upon the good news, and spoke of the good results which I anticipated from the visit.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I have thought of that too, Fred," she re-

plied, "but I have also thought that Grace will have anything like her usual good time in visiting us just now, but you must help me in making her stay as pleasant as possible."

"Thank you, Kate. A most agreeable task, I assure you, but I am afraid I shall not prove

a satisfactory substitute for Pierre."

Kate's face saddened again at this reference to her absent brother.

"That may be true, Fred, though I think not in the sense you mean to convey. Grace likes Pierre as a friend and as my brother Beyond that I do not think she regards him differently than she does any other of her gentlemen friends, yourself included."

"All right, Kate," I replied, smiling at her way of putting it. "I'll take your word for it, as you ought to know all about it, but I had hoped you might have seen indications in that direction which I could not be supposed to know anything of. But," looking at my watch, "it is getting pretty late and you must feel the need of rest, as, I assure you, I do myself. If there is nothing further you may wish to say to me, I will go, promising to let you know immediately anything which I may learn in connection with Pierre. If agreeable to you, I will drop in here occasionally to ascertain if

you may have heard anything. If you get anything which you may think it important for me to know, send for me at once by telegraph or messenger."

Promising to comply with this request, and requesting me to step in whenever convenient, she extended her hand which I took in mine and slightly pressed as I bade her good-night. I fancied I detected something of a responsive pressure on her part, but, as it might not mean anything except an impulsive expression of thanks, for my sympathy in her behalf, I did not take it much to heart, and, after reaching my rooms, was soon soundly sleeping, oblivious of that as well as of the other incidents of that day which had been so full of exciting events.

## CHAPTER XIII.

For the next two or three days nothing of importance pertaining to the mystery occurred, and, in the meantime, having recovered from my excitement over the affair, I had settled down to business as usual.

In my leisure hours I carefully went over all the details of the case, striving to discover some clue upon which to establish a plausible theory which should confirm my belief in Pierre's innocence. In his message which he left for Kate you will remember that he said, "If Fred calls before you see or hear from me you may show him this. Perhaps he will understand it better than you or father." But, as yet, I had been unable to comprehend his meaning. His reference to my calling I thought applied to my promise to call or send for the diamonds, and the following words implied that, if I came in person, he desired me to know that they were in his possession. But how was I to understand his actions any better than his father or sister? I turned the question over and

over in my mind and could find no satisfactory answer to it. The only idea which I could get was one that had at first impressed itself upon me, but which I was obliged to dismiss at once. This was, that taking the jewels from their place of concealment as a joke upon his father, he had intended to return them to me at the store, but, fearing that I might call for them before going down in the morning, he had left instructions with Kate for her to show me the card when I would at once understand his intentions. But at the time Kate showed me the card, I had ample reasons to know that the diamonds had not been so returned. Although I had been away from the store during most of the day, I knew that if Pierre had left them there during my absence he would probably have left instructions with some person to mention the fact to me, on my return. I had received no such information, as I certainly should have, whether he so instructed the clerks or not, in a matter of so much importance to the house as the possession of over seven thousand dollars' worth of jewelry. True, I had not asked any questions of the clerks bearing upon the case, as I wished to avoid the necessity of explaining matters; but I knew well enough that none of them had received the

diamonds, nor knew anything of them. To further confirm my belief in this respect, I had from time to time very carefully, but in an indifferent manner, gone over our entire stock of diamond jewelry, and none of the missing earrings were there. Neither did they appear among the sales recorded since I took them them away, nor upon any memorandum of goods in the possession of our outside salesmen. Looking over father's desk, I could find no record of their having been returned to him, during my absence, as I had thought possibly they might have been. In fact I made every possible search for them, or for some trace of them, and was finally, firmly convinced that they had never come into the store after I took them away. No, I did not understand Pierre's message any better than Kate or her father, nor could I see through Pierre's motive in taking them.

Then there remained the other fact of his strange absence without accounting to his father for the money known to have been in his possession. Altogether I remained as much mystified as ever.

I had called at Mr. Lindley's several times, as promised, but learned nothing new connected with the affair. The old gentleman

was still very bitter against Pierre, and, as he had regained his composure after the excitement of his discoveries, had settled down into a condition of morbidly brooding over his "disappointments and disgrace." Kate, in sympathy for her father's sufferings, and in her own unsettled state produced by Pierre's continued absence, was showing the effects of the strain upon her, though she was endeavoring to cheer her father with assurances of her perfect confidence in Pierre, and her belief that before long they would be convinced of his entire innocence. I accepted an invitation to dine with them on Saturday evening when I should meet Miss Hartwell. There were to be no other guests, as, of course, in their present uncertain state of mind, the presence of such would be embarrassing. I arrived at the house in good season and found Miss Hartwell looking at her best and in her usual good spirits. Kate, seeming to reflect something of her friend's lively nature, was like herself again, and I could already see evidences of the good effect which Grace's visit was having upon her. I was very warmly greeted by both of them, and no allusion was made to Pierre or his absence by any of us, either before going out to dinner or while at table.

The dinner itself was a fair example of Kate's good taste in the selection of the viands, and in the furnishing and arrangement of the table, and of the skill of her veteran cook in the preparation of the savory dishes. It passed off pleasantly enough, although it was plain to me that, upon the others as well as myself, Pierre's absence had a depressing effect. We needed him in his place at the board to complete our little party. We missed his witty and entertaining talk, his lively rehearsals of the doings and sayings of the day, and the amusing little passages at arms between him and Miss Hartwell, which were wont to keep us all in such good humor. Miss Hartwell tried to make the best of the situation, however, and, taking my cue from her, together we succeeded in restoring even Mr. Lindley to himself again for the time.

After dinner I was alone in the drawing-room for a short time with Miss Hartwell, Kate having left us to give some instructions about the house, and Mr. Lindley not having rejoined us yet. As soon as Kate had gone out, Miss Hartwell came over where I was sitting, and taking a seat near me, said, in a rather low voice:

"Mr. Hopkins, I have been longing for hours for this chance to talk with you."

Knowing well enough what was coming, I said nothing in reply, merely bowing my assent.

"I cannot believe," she continued, very earnestly, "that, like Mr. Lindley, you have lost your senses over this affair of Pierre's, or, that like dear Kate you are in such a confusion of doubts and hopes that you have failed to employ your reason to assist you in clearing up the mystery, as they term it. I have a high opinion of your practical good sense, and cannot yet believe but that you must see that any suspicion against Pierre's honesty is entirely groundless."

"I thank you, Miss Hartwell, more for your compliments to my good sense, as you call it, than for your evident confidence in my ability to account for Pierre's peculiar actions. I may as well acknowledge to you, at once, that I am as much in the dark in this respect, as either Mr. Lindley or his daughter."

"Do you mean to tell me, sir, that, in your long intimacy with Pierre, you have not learned him well enough to be able to account for his motives in anything he might do, or, at least, to know that there must be reasons for any act of his which should preclude any thought of dishonor in the smallest degree, as applied to him?"

By Jove! I thought, as I saw the effect of the deep feelings which were stirring her, her flashing eyes and heaving bosom, and noted the rising tone of her voice as she proceeded. Here is a champion for a man to have, and here also is an indication of a deeper interest in her brother than Kate has acknowledged or perhaps foreseen her friend to possess.

"Your firm confidence in Pierre's integrity does you credit, Miss Hartwell, and to no one could it be more gratifying than to me, his closest friend." I replied. "But, while I can assure you of my unbroken faith in him, I must plead guilty to an utter ignorance of his motives in absenting himself at this time, and to the perplexity in which I find myself when I try to account for the circumstances which immediately preceded his sudden departure. I presume you to be acquainted with all the various incidents connected with this strange affair. Your words not only express your perfect faith in Pierre, but also lead me to think that you may be able to suggest some explanation of his actions which has not occurred to any of us here. It is possible that, with your help, we may accomplish something in the way of clearing up the mystery. I am ready and anxious to do anything in my power, and shall be pleased to

hear from you any suggestions you may have to make."

She hesitated a moment before she answered:

"My faith in Pierre is strong enough without requiring proofs of his honesty. When he returns, as I am confident he will before long, we shall learn from him the reasons for his absence, which we shall find to be not at all compromising to his honor, and shall also have satisfactorily explained to us the mysterious disappearance of your diamonds and Mr. Lindley's money. But, like the rest of you, I am impatient of delay and disposed to find a way out of this perplexing jumble as soon as possible. It is my first experience in this line, and I don't know as I can be of any service to you, but, when I learn just what you have done in the way of investigation, perhaps I may think of something which you may have overlooked, and which may be worth following up."

As I had not done much towards investigating matters since the diamonds had been traced to Pierre, it did not take long for me to acquaint her with my doings. While I was speaking Kate came in and listened with interest to what I said, although she learned nothing which I had not previously told her. As I finished, Miss Hartwell said, reflectively:

"Then you are sure, Mr. Hopkins, that the diamonds are not now, nor have not been at your store since you took them away?"

"As sure as I well could be," I replied, "I have taken every measure to assure myself of that fact. Jewelry of that kind is carefully guarded by us, and a careful record kept of it."

"Yet, I see no other construction to be put upon Pierre's reference to you in his message than that he should return them to you, or at least to the store," she said, "that was your reading of it too, I believe?"

"It certainly was," I replied, "though at the time I read it I knew well enough that he had not so returned them."

"What did Pierre mean by saying that I should never see the diamonds again, and by his reference to my having had my "pick" out of them?" asked Kate, turning to Miss Hartwell.

"Just nothing but nonsense, my dear," she replied, "to have a little fun at your expense. If Pierre had really started out to make a thief of himself he would never have left that message for you at all. Don't you see, Kate, that if you had found the card at once, or even had noticed the writing upon it when you did find it, you would have had time enough to have caught

10

your brother before he left his office? As he had every reason to suppose that you would read the message within a short time after he left the house, about as foolish a move as he could have made, in starting on his new career, would have been to leave that card behind him, and then proceed leisurely about his business for the greater part of the day. Have you thought of this yourself, Mr. Hopkins?"

I was obliged to confess that I had not, and acknowledged that it was a good point in Pierre's favor, but, as I never had proceeded in the case with any idea of his having taken the diamonds, except in sport, I had attached no importance to the message beyond its reference to myself.

"If the police officer had seen the safe opened," she continued, "it is my opinion that the mystery concerning the diamonds would have been dispelled very soon. Perhaps your father made a mistake, Kate, in dismissing him as he did, instead of informing him of Winnie's statement and showing him Pierre's message. What is your opinion of it, Mr. Hopkins, since getting more light on Pierre's actions?"

"I cannot see that Sloane could have been of service to us, considering that he could not have learned of the new developments in the case until several hours after Pierre's departure," I replied. "I think that Mr. Lindley's objection to have even Sloane know of the evidence against his son was justifiable and highly praiseworthy, considering the fact that he believed then, and is still confirmed in his belief, in Pierre's guilt."

"Well, I admit that it showed a nice sense of honor towards his son for him to decline to employ the officer to follow him up, although he believed him to have betrayed and robbed him. Differing with him very materially in opinion as to Pierre's guilt, I also think that perhaps he was mistaken in his supposed charity, and allowed his feelings to overcome his judgment when he dismissed the officer."

"In what way, Grace? You surely would not have had him put the officer on Pierre's track, and thus add another disgrace to this unfortunate affair?"

And Kate looked horrified at the idea.

"I am not so sure, my dear, but that the proper thing to have done was to have run Pierre down with the police, in a quiet way, and thus have reached the bottom of this affair, at once." She replied confidently.

"For myself, I should be willing to risk any disgrace which would follow such a course. But, judging from the poor figure your detective cut in his investigations here, perhaps he could not have succeeded in finding Pierre. I don't know anything about such things, but it appears to me that, if this Mr. Sloane is justly entitled to the reputation which you say he bears as a skilled detective, he would feel not a little chagrin if he should learn how differently this matter has resulted from what he predicted as the probable result of his efforts. If he should see, as I think I can, that the whole affair turned upon his neglect to have the safe opened in his presence, he would probably feel that the fee which he received for his services was somewhat gratuitous.

"At all events, it appears to me that, in justice to Winnie, he should know of the change in events here, whether he is employed further or not. It might not be necessary to tell him anything about the missing money and Mr. Lindley's suspicions concerning that, although, as we do not share those suspicions, we could not object to his knowing everything that we do in the case. Mr. Lindley may decline taking such action, but I have hopes that possibly we might talk him over, I do not offer this as advice to you, but simply make the suggestion as something better at least than the inaction under which at present the case lies, and for the past

four days has been allowed to rest. You may think it worth considering at any rate."

There appeared much good sense in her ideas, and, for myself, I admitted the force of her remarks. I told her that it had been intended all along that, when the affair was satisfactorily settled, the police officials should be informed of the true facts, in justice to Winnie and her brother; that, while I had no objections to again call Sloane into the case, I feared that we should meet with strong opposition from Mr. Lindley in that direction. Still, we might explain matters to him and possibly secure his assent to the plan. Kate did not interpose any further objections, after hearing Miss Hartwell's sensible reasoning against her first opposition.

"I will agree to anything which promises to cast any light on this present gloom in which we are groping," she said, "And really, Grace, I believe that, from your view of it, possibly the police may be of some service to us. I will send for papa and, perhaps, when he hears your suggestions, he will agree to the proposition."

Mr. Lindley came in presently in answer to her summons, and, after some general conversation, Kate opened the subject to him.

To my surprise, he did not express any strong

disapproval of the plan, and, after Miss Hartwell had repeated her views, as expressed to us, he turned to me saying:

"Really, Fred, I don't see any objections to calling again upon your friend, Sloane, excepting that it is hard for me to think of putting the hounds upon the track of my own son. It must be understood, however, that this pursuit is undertaken not to arrest and punish Pierre, but to induce him to return the stolen property, and to come home again to ask the pardon of those whom he has so basely betrayed."

"Oh, papa," interrupted Kate, "say rather, as we do, that we seek him in perfect confidence of his innocence, and of his ignorance of the distress which his absence is causing us, that he may hasten back to explain whatever we do not understand of this mysterious matter, and to receive our earnest apologies for ever having doubted his perfect honor."

" I wish I could, and with truth, my darling, but I cannot yet see any cause for changing my opinion, but rather, as the days roll by without seeing or hearing from him, I am more and more convinced of the correctness of my views regarding him. It is creditable in you, my dear, that, with all the evidence of his guilt before you, you can still retain your faith in him,

but I pity you, Kate, in anticipation of the disappointment you will experience when you know the whole truth, as before long you must." And Mr. Lindley, embracing her, pressed his lips to her forehead.

"Papa," she said, as she returned his caresses, "it grieves me to hear you talk so. I am sure you will find that you have wrongly accused Pierre, and that you will be the one most ready to acknowledge your error towards him when the proper time comes. Will he not, Grace?"

"I trust so, Kate," replied Miss Hartwell, "and the last to believe that he ever could have harbored a thought against him when he realizes the misleading nature of his suspicions."

"I am pleased, Grace," remarked Mr. Lindley, "at these expressions of your faith in my son, in view of his continued absence under such compromising circumstances, and if it were possible for anything short of positive knowledge of his innocence to relieve my mind of these awful suspicions against him, your championship of him would go a great way with me. It is noble of you, and I am most grateful to you for it. I wish that I could share your feelings of confidence that Pierre will come out from under this cloud, his char-

acter cleared and his honor unimpeached, that I might have in anticipation the pleasure of congratulating him upon the possession of so devoted and enthusiastic a friend as yourself. But, Grace, I fear you are destined to a disappointment in your hopes of him. I can see no break in the cloud. It is all, all dark to me."

"It may be, just at present, Mr. Lindley," she replied, "but, as 'the darkest hour is just before the dawn,' so in this case, while we are yet groping around in apparent gloom, we may anticipate the light which will surely come and dispel whatever doubts and fears we may have. Cheer up, sir, and try to believe that 'behind the cloud' which you see 'the sun's still shining,' as to me it has never ceased to shine. Let us look at the facts in the case, now that we are together, and see if we may not clear away some of the mist which obscures it.

"Mr. Hopkins, let me ask you, as the friend and confidant of Pierre, if you ever knew him to do anything which might in the smallest degree be considered dishonorable; whether, in your long intimacy with him, you can recall any act on his part which would be considered among gentlemen as 'crooked?' That may not be a nice word for me to use, but it has the advantage of being comprehensive."

"I think I may truly say, Miss Hartwell," I responded, warmly, "that previous to this present complication of events, I never saw nor heard of anything, as connected with Pierre, which could in any way be construed as damaging to his well-known character for honesty and business integrity. He has the reputation among his associates at the clubs, and in society, of being a moral, high-toned man, and one against whom no person would dare to whisper a suspicion with regard to his business dealings. No man stands higher in the estimation of his fellows, and he has always fully deserved their confidence. He is, in short, a gentleman."

"You certainly give him a good name, Mr. Hopkins. Now," she continued, "can you imagine any cause which might arise for a gentleman of his standing, with an ample allowance of means at his command for any ordinary uses, with a fairly growing practice promising him future prominence in his profession and a probable fortune; does any reason suggest itself to you, I ask, why a man in this enviable position should steal something less than twenty thousand dollars in money and diamonds belonging jointly to his father and his best friend, abandon his home and profession, and go out into the world with only the proceeds of his crime

in exchange for the loss of his reputation, his friends, his prospective fortune and everything which would naturally tend to his happiness in life; to wander about alone, in disguise, perhaps, of name and person, fearing constantly that he might meet some of his old acquaintances, and, if he should, be obliged to shun them; suspicions of strangers, whom he imagines to be officers of the law in pursuit of him? Have I overdrawn the picture?"

"Not at all, Miss Hartwell," I replied, captivated by her enthusiasm, as shown in her facewhich fairly glowed with excitement as she con, cluded. "And I thoroughly agree with you that no man, in his right mind, could be expected to take a step which promised so little in exchange for so much. The only cause which would ever drive Pierre into so ridiculous a position would be the losing of his wits, and, as we have every evidence that he was in possession of all his faculties up to the time of his going away, why, we must, I think, be convinced that your very graphic picture will not apply to him."

After a short interval, she said:

"Another thing just here occurs to me as in some way connected with Pierre's absence. I refer to that affair of the note which Pierre indorsed for his friend Clark. Do you remember when that note will be payable, Mr. Lindley?"

"I do not," he replied, "in fact I am not certain that Pierre named the date, but my inference from his statement concerning it was that it would come due in about ten days from that time, which would bring it somewhere about the middle of the month. He spoke to me about it on Monday evening, which was the third; and ten days from that time would be the thirteenth. Let's see to-day is Saturday, the eighth, and next Thursday will be the thirteenth. I am not far out in my calculation, I think, as to the maturity of the note, in which case it will be due some day in the latter part of next week."

"You are acquainted with this Mr. Clark, I believe?" she resumed, turning to me.

"Very well," I answered, "although not as intimately as Pierre, who acts as attorney for him, I think. Clark is a stock-broker, doing a moderate business, is a member of the same club as Pierre and myself, and, so far as I know, stands very well in business and social circles. He is a very clever fellow, and he and Pierre have lately taken a mutual liking for each other, which has developed into quite an intimacy between them. He throws considerable business in Pierre's way, which fact, I imagine, ac-

counts for the latter feeling some obligation to accommodate him by indorsing the note."

"Very likely," said Miss Hartwell, complacently, "and also quite commendable on Pierre's part, especially as he had no reason to doubt the statement of his friend concerning his ability to pay it. Do you know anything of Mr. Clark's circumstances?"

"Not especially, although he is generally understood to be making money. Mr. Lindley can probably enlighten you some in that way."

"Young Clark," said Mr. Lindley, "has lately come into considerable property from his father's estate, although his affairs are still in an unsettled condition. Much of the property consists of uncleared lands and other real estate holdings, prospectively valuable, but not immediately available. It was concerning the sale of some of these lands to which Pierre referred in his conversation about the note, a delay in the transfer of which was the cause of Clark's embarrassment at the time."

"Have you seen this Mr. Clark lately?" Miss Hartwell asked, turning again to me.

"Not within a week or so, as I remember," I replied, "but that is nothing unusual perhaps, as he does not come in my way excepting occasionally at the club. I have spent very little

time there during the past week and am quite sure that I have not met him in my visits. But, why do you ask?" I inquired, as I could imagine no relation of her question to the subject in hand.

"Did it never occur to you that possibly this Mr. Clark might be able to throw some light upon the cause of Pierre's absence?"

"Never until now, Miss Hartwell," I replied.

"And even now I do not clearly see why he should be able to do so. But your question has aroused within me a suspicion that Mr. Clark might possibly in some way be of service to us. I wonder I had not thought of this before, and must credit you, as shown in this as well as in several other instances, with having a clearer head for this business than I can rightfully claim."

"You must remember, Mr. Hopkins," she responded, amiably, "that I have only come into possession of the facts in this case after you and others have exhausted every theory which naturally suggested itself to you in explanation of the mystery surrounding the affair; that I have the benefit of your labors, in connection with those of the officer, in following up whatever clues appeared and that, consequently, I have not participated in your excitement and

disappointments. Therefore, I see the necessity of beginning upon an entirely new course of inquiry, and naturally suggest some points that in your previous efforts were overlooked, as I doubtless should also have neglected them, as having no bearing upon the investigation, at that time. Of their present value I cannot of course know any more than you, but think that they are worth considering. I believe it is decided that you are to call upon the police again for assistance, although it was not settled how much you were to tell them. Suppose you decide that question among you, and then you will be ready to submit matters to the officer as soon as you may choose to do so."

After a short discussion, it was decided that, for the present, no mention was to be made to the police of the loss of the money, and I was authorized to see Sloane at his office on the next day, which was Sunday, post him on the new turn of affairs, and get him at work as soon as possible. Before leaving I learned that Mr. Lindley had had several interviews with Mr. Blakely, Pierre's partner, but had learned nothing from him as to Pierre's whereabouts, nor the cause of his absence, which seemed as perplexing to Mr. Blakely as to us. He was firm in his advocacy of Pierre's uprightness, however, and,

though he had not succeeded in securing Mr. Lindley's approval of his views, had evidently confirmed his friendly regard for him, in thus defending his son against his own determined condemnation of him.

"Blakely is like the rest of you," he said, doggedly, "he makes 'his wish a father to his thoughts' and, without any justification beyond his own blind confidence in Pierre for what he has been, he fails to see in his recent actions any cause for mistrust in him. Blakely is generally very clear-headed, but in this instance I fear he is not to be relied upon, shows more sentiment than logic, more the feeling of a woman (excuse me, Grace, and you too, Kate, for speaking so plainly) than that of a shrewd lawyer."

"And right royally, sir, has he earned our thanks for these proofs of his ability to sink the feelings of the lawyer into those of the manand to admit the possibility of any man render, ing himself liable to a suspicion of wrong-doing by acts which may turn out to be only honorable and just."

Mr. Lindley graciously permitted Miss Hartwell to have the last word as, I believe, she would have if she had continued the argument all night. Not that he was at all changed in opinion by her words. It would plainly require something more material than words to do that. But he liked Miss Hartwell and had since his first acquaintance with her, and think his regard for her was intensified by her warm defense of his son even against his accusations. Kate was simply charmed by her words, and, though she said very little, showed in the approving expression of her face, her great satisfaction at having so strong an ally. I thought at the time that, if Pierre was desirous of securing the affection of this noble woman, it would be better for him to prolong his absence a while, and let this enthusiastic feeling of confidence in, and regard for his honor as shown by her 'grow by what it fed upon,' as felt a consciousness that, if undisturbed, it must develop into a more tender passion, and before long.

I left the house, promising the young ladies to attend morning service at church with them, and in the afternoon to have an interview with Sloane, which, under the circumstances, e concluded would be a comprehensive, if not a strictly orthodox way of passing the Sabbath.

## CHAPTER XIV.

I FOUND Sloane at his office when I called, and he appeared pleased, though not at all surprised, to see me.

"Well, Mr. Hopkins, I suppose that the return of your diamonds, and the girl's explanation of matters connected with their temporary loss have quieted the excitement up at Mr. Lindley's, and everything is lovely, eh?"

"Not exactly Sloane," I replied. "In the first place the diamonds have not turned up, and, in the next, the girl's explanation has had a disquieting rather than a soothing effect upon myself and friends."

"I don't understand you, sir," he said, startled by my words, "you don't mean to tell me that the diamonds are still missing?"

"That is precisely what I mean," I replied, smiling in spite of myself, at his embarrassment, as he grasped the force of my words, "and that we are as much in the dark concerning them as ever."

"Sit down, if you please, sir," he said in a low,

rapid tone, as he quietly stepped to the door and closed it. I complied, and he drew a chair close up in front of me, and, seating himself he said, quite anxiously:

"You say that you have not recovered the jewelry and that the girl's explanation, whatever it may have been, has complicated affairs more than ever? Please explain yourself, sir, as I own up to being shocked at your statement. My professional reputation may be at stake in this matter."

"It has turned out quite differently from what you predicted it would, Sloane," I replied, rather enjoying his discomfiture; then relenting, "Perhaps we made a mistake in not at once informing you of the new turn of affairs, instead of allowing you to think that you had succeeded in clearing up the mystery. But when you hear what I have to tell you, you will perceive the reason why it was thought better to allow you to retire with a false impression rather than to acquaint you with the facts as they stood, especially as, at that time, it was not thought necessary or advisable to further employ professional aid. But we have reconsidered the matter and have decided to call upon you again, confident that with the new evidence at hand, you will be able to assist us, and at the same time redeem the mistake into which you were led."

Sloane had by this time recovered himself, and also showed his appreciation of my regard for him in again entrusting the case to him, in view of his signal failure in the first instance.

I then told him everything relating to the affair with which he was not already acquainted. When I reached that part pertaining to Kate's finding of the card in the safe I thought I saw him start a little. After I had finished he sat for a minute or two reflecting over my statement before speaking, then said:

"The affair has indeed taken on a different look, and one which makes it more puzzling to me just now than ever. I am alone responsible for the present embarrassment of yourself and friends, Mr. Hopkins."

"In what way?" I inquired.

"By not attending to my business more cautiously. It is the little apparently unimportant things connected with this and many similar cases which are really the hinges upon which they turn, and it is the knowledge of this, and a careful attention to the smallest details which often lead us to success. Oversight or neglect, as in this case, of some matter, which to you might seem trivial, may be the cause of much

future trouble. If I had required that safe to be opened in my presence; the chances are strong that the card in falling would have attracted my attention, and being examined would have furnished positive evidence as to the missing diamonds. My services in the case would then have been at an end, as nothing would have been required but to send down to young Mr. Lindley's office for further information. He did not leave until several hours after that time, as you say, therefore there was ample time for you to have cleared up matters before he left. It was a serious neglect on my part, and one which I very much regret, as it not only misled me in my search for the supposed thief, but has also been the cause of much unnecessary trouble and anxiety to yourself and friends. I see still considerable difficulties in the way of our getting at the facts in the case, but am ready and willing to do anything in my power to aid you, and to make amends for my great blunder."

He seemed deeply mortified and cast down over the affair, and I tried to rally him, by asserting our perfect confidence in him, and my own belief that he was making too much of a very small matter.

"Small perhaps to you, sir, but to me, whose

whole reputation hangs on just such little slips as this, it is a most important one. However, that is past now and the 'least said the sooner mended.' I shall try to make up for it in increased vigilance hereafter."

"I judge from your words, Sloane," I said, to change the subject "that you are of the same opinion as ourselves, (excepting only Mr. Lindley) that my friend Pierre is innocent of any guilt in taking the diamonds?"

"Entirely so, sir," he replied, "as all his actions go to prove; to say nothing of the folly of supposing a young man in his position likely to throw himself away for a few diamonds."

"How do his actions go to prove his innocence?"

"Why, by leaving that card with the message behind him, while he was at his office in town for hours after he supposed it had been read and laughed over," he replied confidently.

"But when it was found and read it was neither laughed over nor understood," I said.

"So it appears, but I do not believe he is responsible for that," Sloane replied. "In some way, whatever little scheme he had in mind for his amusement miscarried, and he left town in ignorance of the result. Probably, if he gave it any thought at all, he supposed that it had come out all right."

"His father's belief in his guilt, how do you account for that?' 'I asked.

"It is rather strange I admit, but Mr. Lindley is a practical matter-of-fact man, and, I should say, difficult to convince of the innocence even of his own son, where the facts are so strong against him. In my study of character I have sometimes noticed that parents will doubt their children's honesty, without properly looking into the evidence in search of a motive for their acts. It may be a doubt that is born of their fears, as some people always take the gloomy side of any question, but it seems quite unaccountable. I have given you my opinion of Mr. Pierre's actions as founded upon your knowledge of and belief in him. Any other cause for his acts must be found out from other sources."

"What do you mean, Sloane?" I asked, rather petulantly, as I did not like his words which implied my want of knowledge of Pierre's true character.

"I mean just this, sir," he replied, "if your friend did not innocently take those diamonds, and if his absence has anything to do with them, (which I doubt as you know) there is some reason for his acts which you would never suspect, but which can be discovered from some source.

Perhaps his father's knowledge of some such reason is the cause of his bitterness towards him. I do not say this is so, mind you, as I have every confidence so far in his innocenen and shall proceed in that belief to try and discover his whereabouts. Failing in this, it will be time enough to proceed on the other assumption."

He then asked me the name and location of our club, and for the names of some of the members best acquainted with Pierre, for the address of Walter Clark and also for the location of Pierre's office, and the came of his partner. These items he entered in his memorandum book and then stated that, if he needed any further information from me, he would call upon or send for me. I suggested that the latter would be the better course, as his presence at the store where he would probably be recognized, might necessitate some explanations to our employes, which, just then, I did not consider advisable. He coincided with me in this view, and so it was arranged that if he wanted me he should make an appointment with me at his office. I added that he could probably find me during the evenings at Mr. Lindley's house, and later at my hotel, if the case was urgent. He said that he should probably drop in at Mr. Lindley's himself sometime during the next day or evening, as it might be necessary for him to see the girl, Winnie, and have her explain some parts of her story more explicitly, and there were other reasons, perhaps, which might call him there which did not then appear.

"As to the girl," he said, "her statement to her mistress confirms what you may remember I told you, that at the time I was questioning her I saw that she was not telling everything she knew, that there was something of importance held back by her. Another thing, her story shows that Miss Lindley had left the safe door open, as the girl says that she heard young Mr. Lindley close and lock it. This is of no consequence, that I can see, except that it shows a natural cautiousness on his part not to leave valuables exposed. The open window, though, is still a mystery, no one yet accounting for it. It remains with me an important incident, and one that I cannot explain in any way consistent with our theory as to the disappearance of the diamonds. However it does not effect the case just now, and perhaps at the proper time it may be satisfactorily explained. There is more in this affair than I anticipated, Mr. Hopkins, and, unless young Mr. Lindley suddenly returns and explains matters, it may be some time before we are out of the woods."

"I hope not Sloane, in the interest of all concerned, but, like the rest, must trust to fate, I suppose. I will not detain you longer, and besides I have an engagement to dine with some friends at the hotel, and must be going. Goodday."

I arrived at my rooms, and, after dressing, found I had some time to spare before my dinner engagement, which was simply to join a little family party at the regular dinner of the house. I lighted a small cigar and again ran over in my mind all the incidents of the past week, with a view of straightening out many bewildering ideas which had, from time to time, occurred to me, and to try to formulate some theory upon which I could firmly stand, and honestly believe as the truth in this strange affair. But the more I thought over it, and tried to fit the various parts of it together, the more I was puzzled to make anything of it. Miss Hartwell's theories had seemed new and reasonable as expounded by her, and agreed thoroughly with the views of Sloane, but somehow, when I came to quietly ponder over the affair, it seemed as much mixed up as ever. In my statement to Sloane I had given him everything which had transpired in connection with the diamonds since he had been retired from the

case, and also told him of the affair of the note, and of the various theories and suggestions advanced by the different parties, especially those of Miss Hartwell. To these latter Sloane had appeared to attach the most importance, and they coincided in every instance with his own views. I fancied that when she met Sloane, she would excuse his previous "blunders" as she called them, when she discovered him to be of her way of thinking with regard to Pierre's ac-"At all events," I thought, "something may come of it all, and, as these people seem quite clear-headed in the matter while I must own to being quite befogged at present, I think I shall leave them to work it out, without interference or suggestions from me."

I was getting a little tired of the thing, and it was a pleasant relief when the time came to go down and join my friends, and in the social table gossip to forget for an hour or two every thing in any way associated with the affair.

## CHAPTER XV.

Mr. Lindley dropped in at the store during the next forenoon on his way down to Pierre's office to see his friend Blakely. Kate had asked him to call and invite me to join them for an afternoon drive and return with them to dinner. He said he was going to drive his new pair of browns, and hoped I should find it agreeable and convenient to accept, as he wanted my opinion of the horses. Thanking him for his confidence in my opinion in a matter where his own judgment was so reliable, as it was in anything pertaining to the qualities of a horse, I promised to be on hand at the appointed time. As he was leaving I reminded him of the fact that Sloane knew nothing of the missing money and, as he might possibly visit Mr. Blakely in his search for points concerning Pierre, I suggested that he, Mr. Lindley, should explain matters to Mr. Blakely. Otherwise he might innocently divulge the secret to Sloane, as he would naturally think the officer to be in possession of all the facts connected with Pierre's absence.

"I am glad you have mentioned it, Fred, as

I might not have thought of it. What does Sloane think of matters now that he sees how he was misled by the former evidence?"

"He was greatly surprised, I can assure you, but, like all of us, excepting only yourself, sir, he sees no cause of suspicion against Pierre."

"Possibly not with the lights he has, but if he knew all the facts he would probably see things more clearly. But let him work it out if he can, and then we shall know more about it than we do now."

"I hope so, sir," I replied, "and that you may see how mistaken you have been in your suspicions."

"So do I, Fred, so do I, and as fervently as you, but I fear it is only hoping against hope," he said as he went out.

We had a most enjoyable drive in a stylish English trap drawn by the perfectly matched seal-brown horses. Mr. Lindley handled the reins at the start, with Miss Hartwell upon the box seat beside him, Kate and myself occupying the back seat. It was a perfect afternoon, warm enough for the season, with a deep, blue sky, broken here and there by light clouds which skimmed along before a fresh westerly breeze casting ever changing shadows over the landscape. The Park was already getting on

its summer attire, which, in the look of fresh verdure of tree and plant and lawn, renders it at this season unexcelled as a beauty spot to admirers of 'Nature, improved by Art,' the roads were smooth and clean, and, as we bowled along among the throng of handsome turn-outs almost filling the drives, constantly exchanging salutations with friends whom we passed or met, I noted many admiring glances cast towards our veteran driver and his fair companion on the box, while his beautiful horses attracted the attention of many of our acquaintances. Passing out of the Park we rode on towards the Riverside Drive and the tomb of General Grant. After we had inspected the latter and enjoyed the magnificent view from the hill, Mr. Lindley, before starting upon our return, suggested exchanging seats with me.

"I see no faults about the horses," he said, evidently highly pleased with them; "but perhaps, by handling them, Fred, you may discover something about them which I cannot see."

I was soon seated at the reins, and, turning the horses' heads towards home, we were soon under way at a rattling pace. The pair were fully up to my expectations, and as nice a driving team as I ever saw. With plenty of style and action, a rapid, steady, swinging gait and good bottom, they were as kind as kittens, and, it seemed to me, could be driven by a child with safety. The old gentleman was much pleased at my encomiums over them. The drive home was, if anything, pleasanter than that going out, especially to me in my favorable position, as, like Mr. Lindley, I am a lover of horses. So also is Miss Hartwell, and a good horsewoman too, as I discovered in some of her previous visits to the city, when, with Pierre and Kate we made up little driving and riding parties in pairs and covered all the good roads about town in buggies and saddles.

I gave Miss Hartwell the reins this afternoon, but she resigned them to me again shortly, as we neared the park, not relishing the 'horsey' look it might give her, in so conspicuous a place.

"In your light wagon, behind one of your trotters," she said to me "and in a more retired place, I just glory in driving, but upon this box, with this heavy team and in this crowd, excuse me."

We arrived at home all in the best of humor, refreshed by our outing and with vigorous appetites for dinner, which was served as soon as we were ready for it. Mr. Lindley and myself lingered awhile over our wine after the ladies had left the table, and, as we rejoined them in the parlor later, Kate laughingly addressed me and said she had something important to tell me; she had discovered a clue to my diamonds. I saw at once that she was joking, but retaining a sober face, asked her what she had found.

"Nothing that I have not known since Saturday, shortly after Grace arrived, and while she was showing me her many new things. It's a way we girls have, you know, Fred, of exciting the envy of our friends. Among her jewelry was a pair of solitaire ear-rings which struck me as being very like a certain pair of yours which are missing. I mentioned it to her, and then continued and told her all about our excitement here. I had thought nothing more about her ear-rings till to-night, when I noticed that she was wearing them for the first time. Look at them, please, and tell me if they are not exactly like the pair over which I hesitated so long before deciding upon the pair I selected."

"If Miss Hartwell will allow me?" I said, stooping towards her as she sat.

"With pleasure, sir," she replied, archly, "though I must exact a promise from you, thatif you agree with Kate as to the similarity of the jewels, you will not put your detective upon my track; for, really, since my arrival here I have not felt more secure of my own immunity from suspicion than of that of the other members of the household."

"You have my promise, Miss," I replied, laughing, but I had scarcely spoken, as I took a hasty glance at the pendants, before I inwardly felt that, without employing a detective, I should like to know something as to how she came into possession of them. Getting a little nearer to her for a closer look at them, she deftly unhooked one of the ear-rings and passed it to me. After a careful examination of it I returned it to her and she replaced it in her ear.

"You look sober, Mr. Hopkins," she said.
"Do you also see so strong a likeness between
my ear-rings and some of your missing ones?"

"Decidedly, Miss, I do," I replied reflectively;

"but it may be a mere coincidence."

"Thank you, sir," she said, in assumed haughtiness. "I did not know but that possibly I might be taken as an accomplice of Pierre, as I am found with part of the booty upon me; or at least something closely resembling it."

"Joking aside, Miss Hartwell, have you any objections to telling me how long you have

had those ear-rings, and where they were purchased?"

"None in the least, sir. I selected them myself on Thursday last at one of our leading Washington street jewelry stores, Blank & Co's. They were highly recommended by them as of first quality and of a new style of setting."

"And they are all they claimed for them," I said. "Your answer proves just what I supposed might be the case, that there is a mere accident in the resemblance. I know the house of whom you purchased them very well. They are themselves manufacturers of fine goods to some extent, and their standing is high. We occasionally sell them goods, but not often of this class. They would not readily be duped into buying stolen jewelry. No, there is nothing in it to help us out, though at first glance, I thought I saw a way by which your possession of these diamonds might put us upon the track of mine, and without loss to you."

"I am very sorry then that they have turned out not to belong to you instead of to me."

A glance at her face was only necessary to render it plain that she meant what she said.

"But," she continued, "in what way did you imagine that my diamonds might assist us in the hunt for yours?"

"It is customary in our trade, Miss Hartwell, for leading houses to keep all their new designs of jewelry to themselves until they are ready to offer them upon the market, otherwise their patterns would be copied by their less artistic competitors and hurriedly forced out among the dealers, thus forestalling the originators in the sale of them. Now, all of the ear-rings for which we are looking are of novel designs and styles of settings, original with our house, and none of them had ever been offered for sale previous to my bringing them here for Kate to choose from. They had only that day arrived from the factory. Your ear-rings are apparently perfect duplicates of one pair of them, in size, style and value, and I am not surprised that Kate was impressed by the likeness. I had a hope that they might furnish us a clue towards finding the rest of the lot, but the name of the firm of whom you bought them, and the date of purchase, proves that my suspicions are unfounded. It is a mere coincidence, as I said before, an accidental production of one of our styles by a rival house. It is not the first instance within my knowledge of a simultaneous production of similar patterns of goods by two houses, although such cases are rare. You may continue to wear your very pretty ear-rings in confidence of your legitimate ownership of them,"

Mr. Lindley and Kate had shown much interest in my explanation, and, like Miss Hartwell and myself, were somewhat disappointed that nothing had come of this rather odd circumstance, which had at first seemed to promise us something of value. It only added another to the various incidents of the past few days which had proven so misleading and, like them, was allowed to pass without further consideration.

We dismissed the whole subject for the time, at Kate's suggestion, and passed an hour or so in discussing other topics, interspersed with a song or two by Miss Hartwell, who has a fair voice, and with several by Kate, who has a much better one. We were enjoying ourselves in our old-time way, entirely oblivious of our past excitement, when Jerry came in and announced that Mr. Sloane was in the library and desired to see me. I was provoked at being thus interrupted, and having to return again to the old subject, but, as it must always be business before pleasure, I excused myself to the ladies, promising to soon get through with the officer and return.

## CHAPTEP XVI.

SLOANE had been busy all day and the evening previous seeking information, and had made some interesting discoveries. In the first place he had visited several of the club members best acquainted with Pierre and Walter Clark, and had obtained sufficient information concerning them to justify him in believing them both to be above suspicion, either morally or financially. He had worked this part of his programme most ingeniously, and left no impression upon these gentlemen that anything was amiss.

He got his information in an off-hand friendly way, being introduced at the club as a friend of Clark from out of town, disappointed at not finding him there, and so forth. He had passed the whole evening at the club and was well pleased with the favorable result of his visit. In the forenoon he called upon Mr. Blakely, with whom he was slightly acquainted, and it was at his office where he got the first clue as to the cause of Pierre's sudden absence which we had yet obtained.

He found Mr. Blakely enthusiastic in Pierre's favor, and anxious to assist him in any way possible. It will be remembered that Mr. Blakely had been absent from the office for some time previous to Pierre's departure, and that the latter left hurriedly soon after his return, merely telling Mr. Blakely that he was called out of town on private business, and requesting him to send word up to the house to that effect.

Mr. Blakely consequently could not know the nature of the summons which Pierre had received, but it occurred to Sloane that some of the clerks in the office might remember if any message had been delivered to him which had caused his sudden departure. Mr. Blakely questioned them all, but none of them could recall any incident of the kind, and Sloane had about despaired of getting any knowledge on this point, when a bright young lad called Joe who proved to be an errand boy at the office, happening to come in, Mr. Blakely, without much hope of learning anything from him, put the same question to him. Hesitating a moment to collect himself, he replied that he did distinctly remember that Mr. Lindley had received some sort of a message which was delivered by a messenger boy, and he, Joe, had

signed for it in the messenger's book and carried it to Mr. Lindley. Further than that, he said that the latter immediately upon reading the message looked at his watch and began to make preparations to leave the office, which he remembered he did as soon as Mr. Blakely had returned from lunch. He heard Mr. Lindley tell his partner to send him, Joe, up to his house on his way home to notify his folks of his going away. Mr. Blakely, however, did not send him, probably because as Mr. Lindley's father came in later in the afternoon he told him about it himself.

Here was one point settled at least. Pierre did not run away according to any pre-conceived plan, unless he had an accomplice or companion, who either accompanied him on his journey, or who met him somewhere by appointment, all of which that message, if it could be found, would doubtless explain. It would also demonstrate the truth or falsity of another view of the case participated in by both Mr. Blakely and Sloane, namely, that the message was an urgent call for Pierre to meet some one at a distant point on pressing business. In any case the possession of that message would serve them a good turn just then, and they set about to hunt for it, but with slight hopes of finding it.

Sloane here gave me a graphic account of their search, how they closed the doors leading out of Pierre's private office and went over everything upon his desk and tables, without discovering any trace of the message; how finally Mr. Blakely agreed with him that, in a matter of such importance to them, and probably also to Pierre, they would be justified in unlocking the drawers and searching among his private papers. With the aid of one of a number of small skeleton keys, which he had in his pocket, Sloane deftly opened the principal drawer of the desk and there, right in front, where it had been hastily thrown, lay a telegram. It was dated from a small town in the northern part of the State, and read as follows:-

May 4th, 1886.

Take the three-thirty (3:30) train to-day and meet me at —Hotel here to-morrow morning. All O. K., I think.

CLARK.

This then was the message which had summoned Pierre, and in response to which he had left upon the mysterious journey so unaccountable to us.

Upon reading the message it did not take long for Mr. Blakely to decide upon his interrepretation of its meaning, and Sloane fully agreed with him. The land belonging to Clark, and over the sale of which the trouble had occurred, was probably situated somewhere in the vicinity of the town from which the message was sent, and at which he had appointed to meet Pierre. He had evidently preceded the latter in visiting the locality, with a view of clearing up the title by himself, if possible, and, failing to satisfactorily accomplish this without the assistance of a lawyer, had arranged with Pierre, before leaving, that he should join him as soon as possible, after receiving a message to that effect. He had discovered a necessity for Pierre's professional services, had summoned him to meet him, and Pierre had gone at once as promised.

If they had correctly interpreted the message Sloane should be able partly to corroborate their views at Clark's office, where naturally some information should be obtained concerning his whereabouts for the past eight or ten days. As anticipated, upon inquiring of Clark's principal clerk, Sloane learned that Mr. Clark had been out of town since Saturday, the

first of the month. He believed he was somewhere up in the Adirondack region, looking after the sale of some land. He was uncertain at the time he left just how long he might be away, but said he thought not over a week or so. The clerk added that he was looking for him to be back now every day.

Going back to Mr. Blakely with this confirmatory news, and looking the case over from every point, they had about concluded between them that there was nothing more to be done at that time, as in the natural course of events, if they saw matters correctly, Pierre must soon return. Clark, in closing his message to Pierre had indicated his confidence that they would be able to remove the flaws from the title to the property, and conclude the transfer. They had evidently met with some delays, and Pierre was remaining with his friend to see the matterfully settled, and the money for the land paid over. They were in a region of country where mail communication with the outside world was irregular and infrequent, and the telegraph had yet to come, which facts probably accounted for their having had from Pierre no explanation of his prolonged absence.

According to the understanding of Mr. Lindley, senior, Clark's note would be due within a few days, and they would expedite matters as much as possible in order to have the funds here to meet it.

Mr. Blakely had thought it best for Sloane to report to me what they had learned, and see if I had any suggestions to make with regard to further action. He had brought the telegram to show me, and, after reading it over and hearing his statement, I expressed my approval of all he had done, and assured him that I fully indorsed the views of Mr. Blakely and himself, and that I believed we should soon be relieved of our anxiety by the return of Pierre, and an explanation from him which would clear up the mystery with no discredit to any one.

I requested Sloane to remain while I informed Mr. Lindley and the ladies of his interesting news, and consulted with them upon the question of letting the case rest without additional investigation.

The girls were overjoyed at the new revelations, and even Mr. Lindley had to admit that Pierre's case did not look quite so bad.

"But I don't see any way of accounting for the loss of your diamonds, nor of my money yet, Fred, do you?" and, as he spoke he showed that he was still shaken in his confidence in Pierre, and that nothing short of a satisfactory accounting for the absence of himself and the missing property, and the return of the latter intact would reinstate his son in his affection and esteem.

"I admit, sir," I replied, "that none of us is yet able to fathom the mystery surrounding the disappearance of the jewels and money, but I have no fears but that Pierre, when he arrives, will unravel the perplexing snarl to our complete satisfaction. I will further predict, sir that when what now seems so puzzling to us is made clear, no one will appear in a better light, as connected with the happenings of the past week, than Pierre himself, and that you, sir, will be the first to acknowledge it."

"May God grant you to be right in the first part of your prediction, Fred. Then you need have no fear but that I will see the latter part of it fulfilled to the letter."

"Noble words, sir, and fervently spoken," said Miss Hartwell, trembling with emotion, while her great blue eyes filled up with tears, as she twined her arms about his neck and kissed him. Then, without releasing him, her face close to his, and looking him full in the eyes, she continued, still hardly controlling her feelings. "Those words sound sweeter to me, Mr. Lindley, than any I ever heard you utter.

In them spoke the true father of one whom I believe to be a worthy son, the father, who in the very intensity of love for that son, could not bear that evil should be even thought of him, yet, by a strange combination of events, was led in some unnatural way to condemn him, without giving him an opportunity to clear himself of suspicions which were always groundless to all but you, and which, in the light of our present knowledge, we see to have been also cruel, if not positively wicked. I always knew, sir, that your heart was in the right place, and believed that when the proper time arrived, your fatherly instinct would assert itself in opposition to the unnatural prejudice under which you have suffered for the past few days. I join you in your prayer, Mr. Lindley, as I am sure also do Kate and Mr. Hopkins, with a confidence as our part that it will be granted to the full. Then we shall take pleasure in congratulating you upon your return to yourself, and in blessing you as you fulfill your promise to make amends to your son for your temporary blindness."

The old gentleman was visibly affected by her words, but rallied himself in a moment, and kissing her as she withdrew, replied:

"It has been difficult for me, Grace, to with-

stand the appeals so often made to me by Kate in behalf of her brother, but there have appeared to me strong evidences against him which I could not put aside. There seems some warrant now for your faith in Pierre, and I acknowledge to a growing feeling of hope within me that perhaps you and the others here have been nearer the truth in your opinion than I have. We are not out of the woods yet, Grace, and these hopes may never be fulfilled, but I shall take courage from your deep feeling of trust in my son, which more than anything has served to assist me in bearing up against this trouble. If Pierre should come out of this affair unscathed he will owe you a debt of gratitude, my dear, which, I fear, he will never be able to repay. But I can assure you that it shall be from no fault of mine if he does not make the attempt. I imagine, however, that he has inherited enough of his father's perceptive qualities to be able to know when the wind is setting favorably for him without much prompting. How is that, Fred?" and Mr. Lindley fairly chuckled with delight, as he noted Miss Hartwell's growing blushes, and turned to me with a sly wink.

"It was well put, sir," I replied, smiling, "and I have hopes in that direction as well as your-

self but, as I see that Miss Hartwell appears quite surprised, not to say ruffled, at our assumptions perhaps we would better allow matters in that direction to take their own course."

Miss Hartwell had by this time recovered her equanimity, andwas looking terribly severe at me.

"I quite agree with you, Fred," said Kate, in sympathy with her friend, "It is not right to discuss such matters in the presence of the persons in interest, or rather in the presence of but one of them. It is quite embarrassing."

As it was not plain that Kate had helped matters much by her sympathetic interference in behalf of her friend, and as the subject was growing somewhat embarrassing all around, we dismissed it with a hearty laugh. I had quite forgotten Sloane, who all this time was waiting in the library for my return with whatever orders we might have for him. Referring to this fact, I inquired what course it would be best to take, and was answered by Miss Hartwell, who expressed a desire to see the officer and suggested my calling him into the parlor and discussing the matter there.

"I never met a real live detective, you know, and, from what I have read of them in books, have always imagined them to be quite different from ordinary people, that they were able to see through a mill-stone if necessary, and quite competent to draw out all of the facts in any case, however hidden, by some inherent cleverness of which they possess a monopoly, and which ordinary mortals cannot acquire. I admit that my faith in their powers has been somewhat shaken by my knowledge of your experience in this case, but all the same, I should like to meet this Mr. Sloane, as just now he seems to be showing more shrewdness than I thought him capable of, with no offense to you, Mr. Hopkins."

As there was some justification for her harsh criticism of Sloane's ability we could only smile at her allusions, and, there being no impropriety in calling him in, I went and summoned him.

We soon returned and Sloane met with a very polite reception by both of the ladies. He appeared a little confused at first by his surroundings in the elegant drawing-room, and somewhat diffident over the attentions he received, but he soon recovered himself and joined in the conversation in his naturally easy way.

We were discussing the advisability of following up the clues obtained as to Pierre's journey, and of dispatching the officer upon the trail when, suddenly, we heard the street door close and the footsteps of some person in the hall. Mr. Lindley started with the evident purpose of discovering who the intruder might be, but had scarcely left his chair before the footsteps ceased and there, standing at one side of the drawn portiere, curiously peering into the room, stood Pierre.

## CHAPTER XVII.

WE all, save Sloane, jumped to our feet and stood in startled surprise. Mr. Lindley stopped as suddenly as if he had been shot, and altogether there must have been presented for Sloane's admiration as interesting a tableau as it had been his lot to witness for many a day.

The silence for a few moments was intense. No one either moved or spoke for the space of a minute, as it seemed to me, when, slowly moving through the doorway, Pierre stepped into the room, his eyes moving from one to another of us, with an expression in his face of mixed wonder and curiosity which I shall probably never forget.

The situation seeming to strike Miss Hartwell as something ludicrous, she was the first to break the silence.

"When we get our wits after this sudden interruption, perhaps we may resume our politeness and—"

"Excuse me, Grace," broke in Mr. Lindley, turning towards us, "I know what you would

say, but I claim the right to settle this matter in my own way." Turning again to Pierre, "As there are some explanations required of you, sir, before you can resume your position and standing in this house, you will oblige me by leaving this room with me, and, in a more retired place, explaining your peculiar actions of the past week."

Pierre stood with his eyes riveted upon his father's face, deeply interested in his words. As Mr. Lindley concluded Pierre, with an uneasy, inquisitive sort of look towards the ladies and myself, and a rapid glance at Sloane, who still remained seated, responded:

"Well, father, I must confess that this is a rather peculiar kind of reception for one to get at home after a week's knocking about the country. I am completely in the dark as to what it all means, and, my curiosity being considerably excited, I desire to get at the bottom of it as soon as possible. I am ready, sir."

They had no sooner left the room than, relieved of the strain of our late embarrassing situation, and recovering our senses, we began exchanging views as to the upshot of the affair. We should soon know the result so that any further conjectures would not be in place, yet we all agreed that, so far, Pierre, in word and

action, had indicated that our confidence in him had not been misplaced. We had not long to wait, yet to us in our suspense the minutes seemed drawn out into hours.

Presently they returned, Mr. Lindley with his arm locked into Pierre's and the faces of both covered with smiles. Advancing towards us, as they reached the middle of the room they halted, and Mr. Lindley spoke as follows:

"A great load has been lifted from my heart to-night, one that I did wrong in ever permitting to rest there at all. I need only say further that the first part of your prophecy, Fred, has been fulfilled to the letter, and that it only remains for me to keep my promise to you to render it complete. I have already obtained Pierre's forgiveness of my sin towards him, and I turn him over to you for your congratulations, as I freely acknowledge the cruelty and wickednes (as Grace would call it) of my mistaken suspicions against him. When you get through with him I fancy from some things which came out in our interview, that he may have a story, to tell which will have some interest to all here including our friend, Mr. Sloane."

If Pierre had thought his former reception peculiar he must have considered it fully compensated for in the warmth of the welcome which then met him. Kate was exuberant in her joy, alternating in tears and smiles as she hugged and kissed him.

Miss Hartwell, though not demonstrative in manner, showed much feeling in congratulating him upon his return. For myself, I told him that, though I was not at all surprised at the happy ending to the comedy, at the same time I was glad, more on behalf of the others than on my own account, that he had relieved us of further suspense.

When we introduced Sloane to him he received him most cordially, and insisted upon his remaining to hear his account of some incidents of the case which might interest him.

We were soon all seated and eagerly waiting for him to commence his story.

Looking around our little circle his countenance showing a self-complacent, amused sort of look, he began:

"In the first place, Fred, I suppose your diamonds should be accounted for, so far as my knowledge of them goes. I am greatly surprised at hearing from father that you know nothing of their whereabouts. It is very strange, but perhaps after hearing what I have to say about them, you may be better able to account for their second disappearance than I am."

As he proceeded he had assumed a serious look not at all feigned. What can he mean, I thought, completely taken aback by his words. Certainly, so far he was not very reassuring to our hopes with regard to the missing jewels. Noticing my inquiring look, which was reflected in the faces of the others, excepting Mr. Lindley, he continued:

"To go back to the beginning of this curious affair: Last Tuesday morning on my way down to breakfast, as I was starting down the upper stairway, I saw father coming from his rooms. When he was passing the door leading into Kate's front room he suddenly stopped, apparently startled by something which he saw within the room. Hesitating only a moment, he stepped inside the door, and I, considerably interested in his strange movements, quietly moved down a few steps until I had a clear view of the room. What followed then you all know, how he removed the diamonds and carried them through into his own room and locked them in his drawer after having discovered Winnie handling them. Winnie came hurrying out and up the stairs, without seeing me, until she had nearly run against me. Waiting a few moments for father to get through with the diamonds and go down-stairs, I went cau-

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tiously down and into his room to carry out a little scheme which had occurred to me while watching his manœuvres. In the first place I thought him over-cautious and mistakenly suspicious of the girl, and in the next place was amused over his peculiar choice of a place for securing the diamonds. To convince him of the fact that he had not insured their safety by merely placing them out of sight, I conceived the plan of removing them from the drawer, and returning them to their proper owner. As I passed the safe in going into his room I noticed that it stood wide open. This fact I saw would prove of advantage to me in carrying out my little joke. Why Father had not availed himself of the safe in secreting the diamonds was incomprehensible to me, as I thought he must have noticed that it was open when he went past it on his way out the first time. As you are aware, I was not long in securing the jewels, after which I wrote the message to Kate upon the back of one of her photographs which I luckily found in the drawer. As I turned to go the idea struck me that if I should raise the window over the back porch it would add to the excitement when the diamonds were missed, and, acting upon the idea, I threw it open before going out. While I was fumbling about

the drawer I chanced to look into the mirror in front of me, when I saw the girl Winnie reflected therein as she stood in Kate's room, an interested observer of my movements through the medium of the mirror there. I cannot say whether or not she caught my glance, if she did she gave no evidence of it, that I could see. I placed the card in the safe in such a position that I supposed it would be the first thing noticed when the safe door was opened. I locked the safe for two reasons; the first being that, as there was much valuable property in it, it was as well to have it secured; the other and most important one to me just then was, that, when the diamonds were missed, search would naturally be made to discover if anything else were taken, and Kate, remembering the open safe, would hurry there, and, finding it locked, upon opening the door would discover my message. I never imagined it to be possible that any but a correct interpretation of the message could occur to either you, father, or Kate, but, to make myself secure against your misapprehension of my meaning, I suggested your showing it to Fred when he should call for the diamonds, as I fancied he would do on his way down to business. I had no doubt but that he would see through my plan. I wrote the message hastily, perhaps somewhat excitedly too, and its meaning may have been somewhat ob scure, but, if my plan had worked as I had anticipated, that would have been of little account, as you had plenty of time before I left town in the afternoon to have straightened matters out. It was an unfortunate omission that you made in neglecting to look in the safe at first, and how you, Mr. Sloane, should have overlooked it I cannot easily comprehend. The conversation at the breakfast table was convincing to me that the plot which I had laid for a little scare to both father and Kate would prove successful. I saw nothing of how it was possible for it to miscarry, as it appears to have done, with such unfortunate accompaniments. Father it appeared had hidden the diamonds more in spirit of mischief, and to have a little fun at Katie's expense, than from any fear of their being stolen. Taking the cue from him, I coincided with him in his reproofs of Katies carelessness, while I inwardly chuckled over the clever manner in which the tables would be turned against him by my little scheme.

"I went first to my office after leaving here, as I thought it a little early for you to be at your store. I soon became busily engaged and all thoughts of the diamonds and the joke con-

nected with them slipped from my mind for the time. It must have been somewhere between ten and eleven o'clock, when, in searching my pocket for something, my hand came in contact with the box, and I was suddenly reminded of the diamonds. Seizing my hat, I went immediately around to your place. I learned that you had gone out, but that your father was in the office. As I had not much time to spare I decided to leave the jewels with him and not wait for your return. Acting upon this decision, I walked into the office, explained matters to your father and left the diamonds in his care. Here ends my knowledge of them, and, I think, also my responsibility for them."

I was completely mystified by this statement of his disposition of the jewels, although I had anticipated, shortly after he began, what it would lead to.

"Were there any persons in the office with father while you were there?" I asked.

"Yes," he replied, "one or two gentlemen who were strangers to me, and who were about leaving as I entered, and, now I think of it, your traveling man, Watson, was sitting there reading a newspaper. We had a short conversation together before your father was disengaged with the other persons."

"Did Watson learn of your errand there?" I asked eagerly, for I began to suspect some-

thing "or see the ear-rings?"

"Yes, to both questions," he replied. "As your father was looking over the jewels, after I told him how I came by them, he called Watson up to see them. Of course I took no receipt for them, merely stating that one pair of twelve submitted by you had been selected and retained, that you knew of this and which pair it was. I requested your father to count them and see that there were eleven pairs in the box, to which he laughingly assented, and pronounced them all right.

"You certainly should be able to account for their absence in some way, Fred; at least so it

appears to me."

"There is only one explanation," I said, "which I can think of which promises anything like a probable solution to this new mystery, and, in the absence of any other, I shall proceed upon that. It is that Watson added the whole lot of those ear-rings to his stock of jewelry, which had already been selected and packed. It is all right, of course, provided it is true, as I had intended to have him take them or part of them with him. But that father should have given them to him, without having made any

memorandum of the fact, or mentioned it to me, is very strange and not according to his usual careful business ways. True, in the excitements of that day, and my absence from the store until after he had left, he may have had no opportunity of speaking to me, but he certainly could not have omitted to make some record of the affair and put it with the other papers which he left for me to attend to. It is strange indeed, but there is no doubt but that the diamonds are all right, Pierre, and will be properly accounted for. Watson will return to-morrow morning and therefore I shall soon learn whether he knows anything about them. Father himself will not be back until the last of the week, but I know his present address and shall telegraph him for information, if I do not succeed in getting what I want from Watson. You can rest assured that through one or the other of them we shall learn all we want to know.

"But proceed with your story, as we are impatient for an explanation of other matters fully as important as this of the diamonds."

Resuming, Pierre said:

"Father has told me, Mr. Sloane, about the finding of the telegram in my desk, and how you and Mr. Blakely, connecting it with the discov-

ery of Walter Clark's absence from the city on business pertaining to the sale of certain lands, and with my indorsement of his note, formulated a theory which seemed to account for my sudden departure. You have my thanks for your charity towards me in this respect, when the case against me had so bad a look that father himself could not be convinced of the plausibility of your reasoning. It was a very ingeniously constructed theory, sir, and, unlike many of such structures, it had the merit of being strictly correct, and only needs a little filling in of details on my part.

"Clark had negotiated the sale of a large tract situated in the heart of the Adirondacks. The purchase was in the interest of parties who, in prospecting for a site for a hotel, had selected this tract as especially available for their uses. It was situated in a picturesque region high up among the hills, and enclosed a pretty little lake. It was at a considerable distance from the railways, and to reach it necessitated a long ride over pretty rough roads. These facts had heretofore tended to keep its attractions unknown to all but comparatively few of the visitors to those parts, but the growing popularity among our people of a summer life in these grand old woods has made a demand for sites

like this of Clark's, and they are rapidly advancing in value. He had obtained the promise of a good price for the land, the papers were being prepared, and he was expecting to soon consummate the deal, when this hitch occurred through a flaw in the title being discovered in searching the records. As soon as he was notified of the trouble he hurried up there, to confer with the lawyers on the other side, hoping that he might be able to clear the matter up by himself, without assistance from me. It was arranged before he started, that, failing to accomplish his object promptly, he should telegraph me, and I should join him at some designated point as soon as possible. This was the situation of affairs when the message arrived last Tuesday and in response to which I left town so suddenly. Some time previous to this, however, I had received the money on father's account and had placed it in the office safe, expecting to bring it up to him when I came home that evening. As I looked at my watch after receiving Clark's message, I found that I should have time enough, on my way to the cars, to stop at the bank and deposit the money. I thought this the best plan I could follow with regard to it, and did so without stopping to consider the fact that father would have no way of knowing what I had done.

'Mr. Blakely came into the office just as I was ready to leave and I forgot to mention anything to him about my receipt of and disposition of the money, though I think I did request him to send word up here about my going away. Father tells me that he called at the bank next day upon other business and that, while there, he got his pass-book which he had left there some time before. If he had examined that book carefully he would have found, under the proper date, an entry of the deposit to his credit, as he can inform you he did so find it a few minutes ago, when he consulted the bank-book at my suggestion.

"I met Clark at the appointed time and place, and together we set about it to remove the difficulties in the way of the transfer. These difficulties, of themselves, were slight, merely the result of carelessness on the part of some one, connected with a former deal in the property, in not getting the signatures of some distant heirs. But it required considerable traveling here and there about that rough country before we succeeded in finding all the parties. We managed finally to obtain all the desired signatures, in some cases without much difficulty, in others only after considerable argument, and for cash considerations.

"We closed up the matter late on Saturday, Clark received his money, and we started for home as soon as possible."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

I have given Pierre's story as nearly as I can remember it in his own words, and without commenting upon the effect which certain parts of it produced upon different members of the party. He was allowed to proceed without interruption, although it was amusing to note his study of our faces at various important points of the story. As he concluded he was again overwhelmed with the congratulations of all present, and must have felt himself quite a hero in our estimation.

The reference to the missing money must have been quite surprising to Sloane, as it was the first intimation he had had concerning it.

Conversation over the various incidents of the affair became most animated now that everything seemed so plain and clear.

"I wonder," said Miss Hartwell, "how you ever got into such a tangle over the affair in the first place, now that we know the truth."

"Easily enough," I replied, "As you will see when you recall our mistakes and omissions

at important points of the investigation. With regard to the diamonds the first and most disastrous blunder occurred, as he admits himself, when Mr. Sloane omitted to see the safe opened. In connection with the safe Kate also must own to a little remissness, in that she left the door open after removing the diamonds and afterwards failed to notice that some one besides herself must have closed it. The circumstance of the card falling face up and thus hiding what was written upon its back was unfortunate. But to the girl Winnie must be attributed, more than to any one else, a cause for our being so misled in our suspicions. I cannot understand why, with her knowledge of Pierre's actions, she should have allowed herself to rest under suspicion for hours after she might have cleared both herself and her brother, and at the same time have saved us much needless trouble and anxiety."

"Why, Fred," said Pierre, laughing, "don't you see that Winnie had too high a regard for me to renounce me to my own family as a thief, preferring rather to allow herself to be suspected for a time, thus giving me a chance to get beyond reach? When matters began to look serious for her and that worthy brother of hers, and after I had secured a good start, she 'gave

14

me away' to Kate, but, as she, Winnie, had anticipated, it was then too late to overhaul me. I am sorry that she made so serious an error, by her mistaken zeal in my behalf, but must acknowledge my obligations to her for the friend-liness of her motives."

"Do you think that Winnie suspected you of really stealing the diamonds?" I asked, rather surprised at his words.

"I certainly do," he answered. "What else do her actions indicate. She evidently followed me down the stairs and watched me unobserved as she thought, just as she would any thief. Then in her account of it to Kate she showed that such was her idea, and, really, I do not much wonder at it when I consider the circumstances, and that she was not the only one to whom my actions gave the same impression," with a sly glance at his father. "Just here I have something to tell you which will be news to all of you, and rather startling news too, I fancy. It was fortunate for you, Fred, that I took charge of your diamonds, as otherwise they would probably have fallen 'into the hands of a less worthy person,' as I put it in my message to Kate, although when I wrote those words I had not yet learned what I now tell you.

"Before leaving the house that morning I

went from the breakfast table to my room for something I had forgotten. On the way I heard loud talking and wrangling in the direction of Winnie's room, and, as I caught something about 'money' and 'diamonds,' I became interested, and, secreting myself inside my room, I listened. I soon found that Winnie was having some sort of a quarrel with her brother, Richard, as she called him. He seemed very angry and talked in a loud voice while his sister spoke in low, cautious tones and was trying to quiet him. I soon caught enough of their conversation to discover that Richard had, by some means, learned of the presence in the house of an unusual number of diamonds, and had come here to steal them. He had either been caught by Winnie while he was prowling around the house in search of them, or else had come up there for the purpose of compelling her to assist him in the theft. Winnie seemed terrified at his words and was trying to induce him to leave by offering him money, but, although I fancy he took the money, he did not seem disposed to go. Finally, I heard her tell him that the diamonds were not in the house, that they had been already stolen, and that, if he did not leave the house before the family came up from breakfast

and discovered the loss, he would get himself and her into trouble. The fellow would not at first be convinced that she was telling the truth, but when she repeated her statement, and also added that she had witnessed the robbery, (although she did not name the thief) and that there would soon be great excitement over the affair, he appeared to consent to go. In a moment they passed my door on their way downstairs. I was surprised that he should accept her statement about her having seen the diamonds taken without further question; but he was greatly excited, and is probably not very sharp, and consequently failed to notice the improbability of her having witnessed a robbery, and, instead of notifying the family of the fact, waiting for them to discover the loss themselves. I congratulated myself over the lucky escape of your diamonds, Fred, and saw something besides a joke in my having taken them, and in my allusion to both father and Kate in the message as being 'improper custodians of them.' Really, in the light of what I then knew, my message seemed almost prophetic."

We were all deeply interested in this statement by Pierre, but not more so than Sloane, who, throughout its recital, sat with his eyes steadily fixed upon him. When he had con71 4

cluded, Sloane, addressing me, said in a very self-satisfied manner:

"This story furnishes another proof, sir, of the correctness of my suspicion that the girl in her statement did not tell all she knew. No wonder that Miss Lindley found her excited before she told her of the supposed robbery, considering the experience she had just passed through witnessing in what she believed to be the theft of the diamonds by young Mr. Lindley, followed so soon by the disgraceful actions of her brother. I knew well enough at the time that if she would only tell us all she knew it would be of service to us. I was misled by her into suspecting her of being in league with Richard, but it appears that I did not go far astray in my suspicions against him. I could not be supposed to know that Mr. Pierre had anticipated him in getting hold of the jewels, thus interrupting his little game. I own up to my mistake with regard to the girl, and am sorry that she should by her reticence have aroused my suspicions against her. I was not responsible for that. When she learns of the results in this case she will see that her mistaken course has led to unnecessary trouble and confusion, while it has not benefited either herself or her brother."

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"We appreciate your interest in the affair, Sloane," I replied, "and are under many obligations to you. Although you were not successful in your first efforts here, I can see now that if we had allowed you to proceed in your own way instead of retiring you when you supposed you were upon the point of success, you would have gotten at the real facts of the case several days sooner than you finally did."

"In what way, Fred?" eagerly asked Kate.

"If we had informed Mr. Sloane," I answered "of Winnie's story to you, and of Pierre's absence, of course he would have proceeded at once to find a cause for the latter, and would have settled it all in a day or two, just as he did when we finally told him of those facts. Or, even if we had not told him ourselves, the imprisonment of Richard and her own threatened arrest would have caused Winnie to tell him of what she saw reflected in the mirror, and the result would have been the same."

"I see it, Fred," said Mr. Lindley, "and that the discharge of Mr. Sloane was another blunder on my part."

"I am afraid, sir," I replied, "that if we continue looking for blunders, as you call them, we shall find that none of us are exempt from their commission, excepting only Pierre.

Therefore I propose that we cease speculating over the what-might-have-beens of the past and congratulate each other and ourselves upon the present happy termination to our perplexities, Nothing remains to entirely clear us of fur ther doubt but a confirmation of my belief as to my father's disposition of the diamonds, which I am confident I shall have early to-morrow. If I am right in this supposition. I shall also be able to prove Miss Hartwell to be the legitimate owner of a choice pair of the missing brilliants."

While all, excepting Pierre and Sloane, knew something of the drift of my latter remark,

they all seemed equally astonished at it.

After Miss Hartwell had explained in a droll manner to Pierre and Sloane the temporary excitement which a fancied resemblance between the solitaire ear-rings which she was then wearing and some of my missing ones had created, she turned to me and asked in what way I expected to prove the identity of the jewels.

"Very simply," I replied, "our man Watson evidently sold some of the ear-rings soon after his arrival in Boston to Messieurs Blank & Co., and you became a ready purchaser of a pair of them, all of which goes to show the fine artistic taste possessed by yourself and the gentlemen in question. I thought I could not easily be deceived in our own work, but the facts connected with your purchase of them compelled me, at that time, to abandon any hope of obtaining from them a clue worth following. Just now, those very facts are strong evidences to me that Mr. Watson will to-morrow confirm what I have predicted."

#### CHAPTER XIX.

It turned out just as I supposed.

2500

Next morning, on reaching the store, I found Watson already there.

Father had given him all the ear-rings returned by Pierre. He had sold several pairs of them to Blank & Co. on the day after he had left the store, and a reference to his memorandum book showed that the pair purchased by Miss Hartwell was among those thus sold.

Among the letters in the morning mail upon my desk was one from father, enclosing a "Memorandum of diamond ear-rings returned to store by Mr. Pierre Lindley which I gave to Mr. Watson to add to his stock for Boston trip."

Here followed a list of numbers and marks taken from eleven pairs of ear-rings which, upon comparison, tallied with my private memorandum of those which I took with me to Mr. Lindley's house.

Including the pair selected by Kate, they were all accounted for.

7

Father, in his letter, explained the enclosure by saying, that in looking for a certain paper in his pocket-book he had found this instead, and could only account for its presence there and the absence of the other paper by supposing that he had mistaken one for the other at the office. The private paper to which he referred contained the names of some hotels and other information of value to tourists, which he had jotted down at the suggestion of a friend who had called at the office, and who was experienced in the section which father proposed visiting. In his haste at leaving he probably placed the wrong paper in his pocket-book, in which case I had probably found the other among the papers and letters which he had left for my attention. It was of no value then, and I might destroy it, if I had not already done so.

I remembered some pencil notes such as he mentioned which I had found among other papers upon my desk. As they did not interest me in any way, I did not understand why they had been placed there, and had returned the paper to father's desk for him to dispose of upon his return. It still remained there, and an examination of it showed it to be the paper for which he was searching when he came across the memorandum of the ear-rings. The two

papers were exactly alike in size and shape, and might easily be mistaken for each other by a person in haste. Such errors frequently occur but are seldom followed, I fancy, by results as serious as followed this oversight of father's.

His letter cleared up the only remaining mystery connected with the diamonds, and nicely rounded up the explanations previously made by Pierre.

What at one time had looked to be so serious an affair, had, now that the light was turned upon it from all directions, proven to be but a singular mixture of incidents which, harmless of themselves, by their peculiar combination had been the cause of much anxiety, perplexity and trouble.

Now that it had terminated so happily we might laugh over our experiences, but, all the same, would not wish soon to repeat them.

#### CHAPTER XX.

As soon as she learned of Pierre's return and of his explanations which followed it, Winnie made a clean breast to Kate of her rencontre with her brother, as overheard by Pierre.

It had greatly alarmed her, and she had since been in constant fear that, when matters had quieted down again in the house, Richard might repeat his visit.

Kate consulted with her father and Pierre on the subject, and, as a result of their conference, Pierre visited Richard at his home, told him what he had overheard, and promised him clemency if he would agree to leave the city, and remain away. Richard accepted the alternative, and, provided by Pierre with a passage ticket and enough money to furnish him support until he could secure employment, he left for a far distant western town. I leave him there in the hope that, separated from his old companions and the temptations of city life, and dependent upon his own energies he may redeem himself from his bad character and habits,

and start upon a career of honesty and industry.

As it may be expected of me to give some further information upon a more interesting part of my story, I will say that I have an engagement to appear in Boston shortly as best man to Pierre at his marriage with Grace Hartwell, to whom Kate is to be first bridesmaid.

I am still a frequent visitor at the Lindley's, more so than usual just at present, as the arrangement of details of the approaching wedding appears to require many conferences between us.

I have tried to comfort myself in my bachelor-hood with the thought that Kate, feeling the loss of her brother's society, might possibly allow me to take his place in her sisterly affection. I mentioned the subject to Pierre the other day, and his answer was such a peculiar one, that I have been puzzling over it ever since to try and get at what he meant. Said he:

"Kate don't want any other brother, and, if she did, you ought to see that you could not properly assume the rôle. That is not what is ailing you, my boy. Your symptoms indicate something more serious. "Kate is also, I think, suffering from some cause. Grace and I had similar premonitory symptoms, and I suggest that you and Kate get together and compare notes, as we did. It will be comforting at least, and may, as it did in our case, result in your discovering a remedy. Try it, my boy. It can't hurt you in any event, and I really believe it will help you out of your trouble."

' shall have to ask Kate what he can mean.

THE END.

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